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BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

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BOSWELL'S

LIFE OF JOHNSON

EDITED BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. IV

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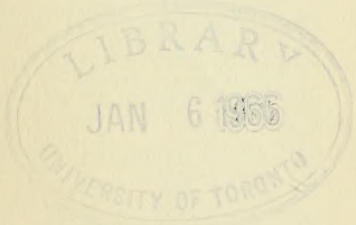

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THE LIFE OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

On Sunday, March 24, we breakfasted with Mrs. Cobb, a widow lady, who lived in an agreeable sequestered place close by the town called the Friary, it having been formerly a religious house. She and her niece, Miss Adey, were great admirers of Dr. Johnson; and he behaved to them with a kindness and easy pleasantry, such as we see between old and intimate acquaintance. He accompanied Mrs. Cobb to St. Mary's Church, and I went to the cathedral, where I was very much delighted with the music, finding it to be peculiarly solemn, and accordant with the words of the service.

We dined at Mr. Peter Garrick's, who was in a very lively humour, and verified Johnson's saying that, if he had cultivated gaiety as much as his brother David, he might have equally excelled in it. He was to-day quite a London narrator, telling us a variety of anecdotes with that earnestness and attempt at mimicry which we usually find in the wits of the metropolis. Dr. Johnson went with me to the cathedral in the afternoon. It was grand and pleasing to contemplate this illustrious writer, now full of fame, worshipping in 'the solemn temple' of his native city.

I returned to tea and coffee at Mr. Peter Garrick's, and then found Dr. Johnson at the Reverend Mr. Seward's, Canon Residentiary, who inhabited the Bishop's palace, in which Mr. Walmsley lived, and which had been the scene of many happy hours in Johnson's early life. Mr. Seward had, with ecclesiastical hospitality and politeness, asked me in the morning, merely as a stranger, to dine with him; and in the afternoon, when I was introduced to him, he asked Dr. Johnson and me to spend the evening and sup with him. He was a genteel, well-bred, dignified clergyman, had travelled with Lord Charles Fitzroy, uncle of the present Duke of Grafton, who died when abroad, and he had lived much in the great world. He was an ingenious and literary man, had published an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, and written verses in Dodsley's collection. His lady was the daughter of Mr. Hunter, Johnson's first schoolmaster. And now, for the first time, I had the pleasure of seeing his celebrated daughter, Miss Anna Seward, to whom I have since been indebted for many civilities, as well as some obliging communications concerning Johnson.

Mr. Seward mentioned to us the observations which he had made upon the strata of earth in volcanoes, from which it appeared, that they were so very different in depth at different periods, that no calculation whatever could be made as to the time required for their formation. This fully refuted an anti-Mosaical remark introduced into Captain Brydone's entertaining tour, I hope heedlessly, from a kind of vanity which is too common in those who have not sufficiently studied the most important of all subjects. Dr.

Johnson, indeed, had said before, independent of this observation, 'Shall all the accumulated evidence of the history of the world;—shall the authority of what is unquestionably the most ancient writing, be overturned by an uncertain remark such as this?'

On Monday, March 25, we breakfasted at Mrs. Lucy Porter's. Johnson had sent an express to Dr. Taylor's acquainting him of our being at Lichfield, and Taylor had returned an answer that his post-chaise should come for us this day. While we sat at breakfast Dr. Johnson received a letter by the post, which seemed to agitate him very much. When he had read it, he exclaimed, 'One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time.' The phrase *my time*, like the word *age*, is usually understood to refer to an event of a public or general nature. I imagined something like an assassination of the King—like a gunpowder plot carried into execution—or like another fire of London. When asked, 'What is it, sir?' he answered, 'Mr. Thrale has lost his only son!' This was, no doubt, a very great affliction to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, which their friends would consider accordingly; but from the manner in which the intelligence of it was communicated by Johnson, it appeared for the moment to be comparatively small. I, however, soon felt a sincere concern, and was curious to observe how Dr. Johnson would be affected. He said, 'This is a total extinction to their family, as much as if they were sold into captivity.' Upon my mentioning that Mr. Thrale had daughters, who might inherit his wealth;—'Daughters (said Johnson warmly), he 'll no more value his daughters than——' I was going to speak. 'Sir (said he), don't you know

how you yourself think? sir, he wishes to propagate his name.' In short, I saw male succession strong in his mind, even where there was no name, no family of any long standing. I said it was lucky he was not present when this misfortune happened. JOHNSON: 'It is lucky for *me*. People in distress never think that you feel enough.' BOSWELL: 'And, sir, they will have the hope of seeing you, which will be a relief in the meantime; and when you get to them, the pain will be so far abated, that they will be capable of being consoled by you, which, in the first violence of it, I believe, would not be the case.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; violent pain of mind, like violent pain of body, *must* be severely felt.' BOSWELL: 'I own, sir, I have not so much feeling for the distress of others as some people have, or pretend to have: but I know this, that I would do all in my power to relieve them.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is affectation to pretend to feel the distress of others as much as they do themselves. It is equally so, as if one should pretend to feel as much pain while a friend's leg is cutting off as he does. No, sir; you have expressed the rational and just nature and sympathy. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved this boy.'

He was soon quite calm. The letter was from Mr. Thrale's clerk, and concluded, 'I need not say how much they wish to see you in London.' He said, 'We shall hasten back from Taylor's.'

Mrs. Lucy Porter and some other ladies of the place talked a great deal of him when he was out of the room, not only with veneration but affection. It pleased me to find that he was so much *beloved* in his native city.

Mrs. Aston, whom I had seen the preceding night, and her sister, Mrs. Gastrel, a widow lady, had each a house and garden, and pleasure-ground, prettily situated upon Stowhill, a gentle eminence, adjoining to Lichfield. Johnson walked away to dinner there, leaving me by myself without any apology; I wondered at this want of that facility of manners, from which a man has no difficulty in carrying a friend to a house where he is intimate; I felt it very unpleasant to be thus left in solitude in a country town, where I was an entire stranger, and began to think myself unkindly deserted: but I was soon relieved, and convinced that my friend, instead of being deficient in delicacy, had conducted the matter with perfect propriety, for I received the following note in his handwriting: 'Mrs. Gastrel, at the lower house on Stowhill, desires Mr. Boswell's company to dinner at two.' I accepted of the invitation, and had here another proof how amiable his character was in the opinion of those who knew him best. I was not informed till afterwards, that Mrs. Gastrel's husband was the clergyman, who, while he lived at Stratford-upon-Avon, where he was proprietor of Shakespeare's garden, with Gothic barbarity cut down his mulberry-tree,[1] and, as Dr. Johnson told me, did it to vex his neighbours. His lady, I have reason to believe, on the same authority, participated in the guilt of what the enthusiasts of our immortal bard deem almost a species of sacrilege.

[1] See an accurate and animated statement of Mr. Gastrel's barbarity, by Mr. Malone, in a note on 'Some Account of the Life of William Shakespeare,' prefixed to his admirable edition of that poet's works, vol. i. p. 118.

After dinner Dr. Johnson wrote a letter to Mrs. Thrale, on the death of her son. I said it would be very distressing to Thrale, but she would soon forget it, as she had so many things to think of. JOHNSON: 'No, sir, Thrale will forget it first. *She* has many things that she *may* think of. *He* has many things that he *must* think of.' This was a very just remark upon the different effects of those light pursuits which occupy a vacant and easy mind, and those serious engagements which arrest attention, and keep us from brooding over grief.

He observed of Lord Bute, 'It was said of Augustus, that it would have been better for Rome that he had never been born, or had never died. So it would have been better for this nation if Lord Bute had never been minister, or had never resigned.'

In the evening we went to the Town-hall, which was converted into a temporary theatre, and saw *Theodosius*, with *The Stratford Jubilee*. I was happy to see Dr. Johnson sitting in a conspicuous part of the pit, and receiving affectionate homage from all his acquaintance. We were quite gay and merry. I afterwards mentioned to him that I condemned myself for being so, when poor Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were in such distress. JOHNSON: 'You are wrong, sir; twenty years hence Mr. and Mrs. Thrale will not suffer much pain from the death of their son. Now, sir, you are to consider that distance of place, as well as distance of time, operates upon the human feelings. I would not have you be gay in the presence of the distressed, because it would shock them; but you may be gay at a distance. Pain for the loss of a friend, or of a relation whom we love, is occasioned by the want which

we feel. In time the vacuity is filled with something else; or sometimes the vacuity closes up of itself.'

Mr. Seward and Mr. Pearson, another clergyman here, supped with us at our inn, and after they left us, we sat up late, as we used to do in London.

Here I shall record some fragments of my friend's conversation during this jaunt.

'Marriage, sir, is much more necessary to a man than to a woman: for he is much less able to supply himself with domestic comforts. You will recollect my saying to some ladies the other day, that I had often wondered why young women should marry, as they have so much more freedom, and so much more attention paid to them while unmarried, than when married. I indeed did not mention the *strong* reason for their marrying—the *mechanical* reason.' BOSWELL: 'Why, that *is* a strong one. But does not imagination make it much more important than it is in reality? Is it not, to a certain degree, a delusion in us as well as in women?' JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, sir; but it is a delusion that is always beginning again.' BOSWELL: 'I don't know but there is upon the whole more misery than happiness produced by that passion.' JOHNSON: 'I don't think so, sir.'

'Never speak of a man in his own presence. It is always indelicate, and may be offensive.'

'Questioning is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen. It is assuming a superiority, and it is particularly wrong to question a man concerning himself. There may be parts of his former life which he may not wish to be made known to other persons, or even brought to his own recollection.'

'A man should be careful never to tell tales of

himself to his own disadvantage. People may be amused and laugh at the time, but they will be remembered and brought out against him upon some subsequent occasion.'

'Much may be done if a man puts his whole mind to a particular object. By doing so, Norton[1] has made himself the great lawyer that he is allowed to be.'

I mentioned an acquaintance of mine, a sectary, who was a very religious man, who not only attended regularly on public worship with those of his communion, but made a particular study of the Scriptures, and even wrote a commentary on some parts of them, yet was known to be very licentious in indulging himself with women; maintaining that men are to be saved by faith alone, and that the Christian religion had not prescribed any fixed rule for the intercourse between the sexes. JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is no trusting to that crazy piety.'

I observed that it was strange how well Scotchmen were known to one another in their own country, though born in very distant counties; for we do not find that the gentlemen of neighbouring counties in England are mutually known to each other. Johnson, with his usual acuteness, at once saw and explained the reason of this: 'Why, sir, you have Edinburgh, where the gentlemen from all your counties meet, and which is not so large but they are all known. There is no such common place of collection in England, except London, where, from its great size and diffusion,

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[1] [Sir Fletcher Norton, afterwards Speaker of the House of Commons, and in 1782 created Baron Grantley.—M.]

many of those who reside in contiguous counties of England, may long remain unknown to each other.'

On Tuesday, March 26, there came for us an equipage properly suited to a wealthy, well-beneficed clergyman: Dr Taylor's large, roomy post-chaise, drawn by four stout, plump horses, and driven by two steady, jolly postillions, which conveyed us to Ashbourne; where I found my friend's schoolfellow living upon an establishment perfectly corresponding with his substantial creditable equipage—his house, garden, pleasure-grounds, table, in short everything good, and no scantiness appearing. Every man should form such a plan of living as he can execute completely. Let him not draw an outline wider than he can fill up. I have seen many skeletons of show and magnificence which excite at once ridicule and pity. Dr. Taylor had a good estate of his own, and good preferment in the church, being a prebendary of Westminster, and rector of Bosworth. He was a diligent justice of the peace, and presided over the town of Ashbourne, to the inhabitants of which I was told he was very liberal; and as a proof of this it was mentioned to me, he had the preceding winter distributed two hundred pounds among such of them as stood in need of his assistance. He had, consequently, a considerable political interest in the county of Derby, which he employed to support the Devonshire family; for though the schoolfellow and friend of Johnson, he was a Whig. I could not perceive in his character much congeniality of any sort with that of Johnson, who, however, said to me, 'Sir, he has a very strong understanding.' His size, and figure, and countenance, and manner, were that of a hearty English squire, with the parson super-

induced; and I took particular notice of his upper-servant, Mr. Peters, a decent, grave man, in purple clothes and a large, white wig, like the butler or *major domo* of a bishop.

Dr. Johnson and Dr. Taylor met with great cordiality; and Johnson soon gave him the same sad account of their schoolfellow, Congreve, that he had given to Mr. Hector; adding a remark of such moment to the rational conduct of a man in the decline of life, that deserves to be imprinted upon every mind: 'There is nothing against which an old man should be so much upon his guard as putting himself to nurse.' Innumerable have been the melancholy instances of men once distinguished for firmness, resolution, and spirit, who in their latter days have been governed like children by interested female artifice.

Dr. Taylor commended a physician who was known to him and Dr. Johnson, and said, 'I fight many battles for him, as many people in the country dislike him.' JOHNSON: 'But you should consider, sir, that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for, every man of whom you get the better, will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him; whereas if people get the better of you in argument about him, they'll think, "We'll send for Dr. —— nevertheless."' This was an observation deep and sure in human nature.

Next day we talked of a book in which an eminent judge was arraigned before the bar of the public, as having pronounced an unjust decision in a great cause. Dr. Johnson maintained that this publication would not give any uneasiness to the judge. 'For

(said he), either he acted honestly, or he meant to do injustice. If he acted honestly, his own consciousness will protect him; if he meant to do injustice, he will be glad to see the man who attacks him, so much vexed.'

Next day, as Dr. Johnson had acquainted Dr. Taylor of the reason for his returning speedily to London, it was resolved that we should set out after dinner. A few of Dr. Taylor's neighbours were his guests that day.

Dr. Johnson talked with approbation of one who had attained to the state of the philosophical wise man, that is, to have no want of anything. 'Then, sir (said I), the savage is a wise man. 'Sir (said he), I do not mean simply being without,—but not having a want.' I maintained, against this proposition, that it was better to have fine clothes, for instance, than not to feel the want of them. JOHNSON: 'No, sir; fine clothes are good only as they supply the want of other means of procuring respect. Was Charles the Twelfth, think you, less respected for his coarse blue coat and black stock? And you find the King of Prussia dresses plain, because the dignity of his character is sufficient.' I here brought myself into a scrape, for I heedlessly said, 'Would not *you*, sir, be the better for velvet embroidery?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you put an end to all argument when you introduce your opponent himself. Have you no better manners? There is *your want.*' I apologised by saying, I had mentioned him as an instance of one who wanted as little as any man in the world, and yet, perhaps, might receive some additional lustre from dress.

Having left Ashbourne in the evening, we stopped to change horses at Derby, and availed ourselves of a moment to enjoy the conversation of my countryman, Dr. Butter, then physician there. He was in great indignation because Lord Mountstuart's bill for a Scotch militia had been lost. Dr. Johnson was as violent against it. 'I am glad (said he) that Parliament has had the spirit to throw it out. You wanted to take advantage of the timidity of our scoundrels' (meaning, I suppose, the ministry). It may be observed that he used the epithet scoundrel very commonly, not quite in the sense in which it is generally understood, but as a strong term of disapprobation; as when he abruptly answered Mrs. Thrale, who had asked him how he did, 'Ready to become a scoundrel, madam; with a little more spoiling you will, I think, make me a complete rascal.'[1] He meant easy to become a capricious and self-indulgent valetudinarian—a character for which I have heard him express great disgust.

Johnson had with him upon this jaunt *Il Palmerino d'Inghilterra,* a romance praised by Cervantes; but did not like it much. He said he read it for the language, by way of preparation for his Italian expedition. We lay this night at Loughborough.

On Thursday, March 28, we pursued our journey. I mentioned that old Mr. Sheridan complained of the ingratitude of Mr. Wedderburne and General Fraser, who had been much obliged to him when they were young Scotchmen entering upon life in England. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a man is very apt to complain

[1] *Anecdotes of Johnson.*

of the ingratitude of those who have risen far above him. A man when he gets into a higher sphere, into other habits of life, cannot keep up all his former connections. Then, sir, those who knew him formerly upon a level with themselves may think that they ought still to be treated as on a level, which cannot be; and an acquaintance in a former situation may bring out things which it would be very disagreeable to have mentioned before higher company, though, perhaps, everybody knows of them.' He placed this subject in a new light to me, and showed that a man who has risen in the world must not be condemned too harshly for being distant to former acquaintance, even though he may have been much obliged to them. It is, no doubt, to be wished that a proper degree of attention should be shown by great men to their early friends. But if either from obtuse insensibility to difference of situation or presumptuous forwardness, which will not submit even to an exterior observance of it, the dignity of high place cannot be preserved, when they are admitted into the company of those raised above the state in which they once were, encroachment must be repelled, and the kinder feelings sacrificed. To one of the very fortunate persons whom I have mentioned, namely, Mr. Wedderburne, now Lord Loughborough, I must do the justice to relate, that I have been assured by another early acquaintance of his, old Mr. Macklin, who assisted in improving his pronunciation, that he found him very grateful. Macklin, I suppose, had not pressed upon his alleviation with so much eagerness as the gentleman who complained of him. Dr. Johnson's remark as to the jealousy entertained of our friends who rise

far above us is certainly very just. By this was withered the early friendship between Charles Townshend and Akenside; and many similar instances might be adduced.

He said, 'It is commonly a weak man who marries for love.' We then talked of marrying women of fortune; and I mentioned a common remark, that a man may be, upon the whole, richer by marrying a woman with a very small portion, because a woman of fortune will be proportionably expensive; whereas a woman who brings none will be very moderate in expenses. JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, this is not true. A woman of fortune being used to the handling of money, spends it judiciously: but a woman who gets the command of money for the first time upon her marriage, has such a gust in spending it, that she throws it away with great profusion.'

He praised the ladies of the present age, insisting that they were more faithful to their husbands, and more virtuous in every respect, than in former times, because their understandings were better cultivated. It was an undoubted proof of his good sense and good disposition that he was never querulous, never prone to inveigh against the present times, as is so common when superficial minds are on the fret. On the contrary, he was willing to speak favourably of his own age; and, indeed, maintained its superiority in every respect, except in its reverence for government; the relaxation of what he imputed, as its grand cause, to the shock which our monarchy received at the Revolution, though necessary; and secondly, to the timid concessions made to faction by successive administrations in the reign of his present Majesty. I am happy

to think that he lived to see the crown at last recover its just influence.

At Leicester we read in the newspaper that Dr. James was dead. I thought that the death of an old schoolfellow, and one with whom he had lived a good deal in London, would have affected my fellow-traveller much: but he only said, 'Ah! poor Jamy.' Afterwards, however, when we were in the chaise, he said, with more tenderness, 'Since I set out on this jaunt, I have lost an old friend and a young one—Dr. James and poor Harry' (meaning Mr. Thrale's son).

Having lain at St. Alban's on Thursday, March 28, we breakfasted the next morning at Barnet. I expressed to him a weakness of mind which I could not help; an uneasy apprehension that my wife and children, who were at a great distance from me, might perhaps be ill. 'Sir (said he), consider how foolish you would think it in *them* to be apprehensive that *you* are ill.' This sudden turn relieved me for the moment; but I afterwards perceived it to be an ingenious fallacy.[1] I might, to be sure, be satisfied that they had no reason to be apprehensive about me, because I *knew* that I myself was well: but we might have a mutual anxiety, without the charge of folly; because each was, in some degree, uncertain as to the condition of the other.

I enjoyed the luxury of our approach to London, that metropolis which we both loved so much, for the

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1 [Surely it is no fallacy, but a sound and rational argument. He who is perfectly well, and apprehensive concerning the state of another at a distance from him, *knows* to a certainty that the fears of that person concerning *his* health are imaginary and delusive; and hence has a rational ground for supposing that his own apprehensions concerning his absent wife or friend are equally unfounded.—M.]

high and varied intellectual pleasure which it furnishes. I experienced immediate happiness while whirled along with such a companion, and said to him, 'Sir, you observed one day at General Oglethorpe's that a man is never happy for the present but when he is drunk. Will you not add,—or when driving rapidly in a post-chaise?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir, you are driving rapidly *from* something, or *to* something.'

Talking of melancholy, he said, 'Some men, and very thinking men too, have not those vexing thoughts.[1] Sir Joshua Reynolds is the same all the year round. Beauclerk, except when ill and in pain, is the same. But I believe most men have them in the degree in which they are capable of having them. If I were in the country, and were distressed by that malady, I would force myself to take a book; and every time I did it I should find it the easier. Melancholy, indeed, should be diverted by every means but drinking.'

We stopped at Messieurs Dilly's, booksellers in the Poultry; from whence he hurried away, in a hackney coach, to Mr. Thrale's in the Borough. I called at his house in the evening, having promised to acquaint Mrs. Williams of his safe return; when, to my sur-

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1 The phrase 'vexing thoughts,' is, I think, very expressive. It has been familiar to me from my childhood; for it is to be found in the *Psalms in Metre*, used in the churches (I believe I should say *kirks*) of Scotland, Psalm xliii. 5:

> 'Why art thou then cast down, my soul?
> What should discourage thee?
> And why with *vexing thoughts* art thou
> Disquieted in me?'

Some allowance must no doubt be made for early prepossession. But at a maturer period of life, after looking at various metrical versions of the Psalms, I am well satisfied that the version used in Scotland is, upon the whole, the best; and that it is vain to think of having a better. It has in general a simplicity and *unction* of sacred poesy; and in many parts its transfusion is admirable.

prise, I found him sitting with her at tea, and, as I thought, not in a very good humour: for, it seems, when he had got to Mr. Thrale's, he found the coach was at the door waiting to carry Mrs. and Miss Thrale, and Signor Baretti, their Italian master, to Bath. This was not showing the attention which might have been expected to the 'Guide, Philosopher, and Friend' —the *Imlac* who had hastened from the country to console a distressed mother, who he understood was very anxious for his return. They had, I found, without ceremony, proceeded on their intended journey. I was glad to understand from him that it was still resolved that his tour to Italy with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale should take place, of which he had entertained some doubt, on account of the loss which they had suffered; and his doubts afterwards appeared to be well founded. He observed, indeed very justly, that 'their loss was an additional reason for their going abroad; and if it had not been fixed that he should have been one of the party, he would force them out; but he would not advise them unless his advice was asked, lest they might suspect that he recommended what he wished on his own account.' I was not pleased that his intimacy with Mr. Thrale's family, though it no doubt contributed much to his comfort and enjoyment, was not without some degree of restraint: not, as has been grossly suggested, that it was required of him as a task to talk for the entertainment of them and their company; but that he was not quite at his ease; which, however, might partly be owing to his own honest pride—that dignity of mind which is always jealous of appearing too compliant.

On Sunday, March 31, I called on him, and showed him as a curiosity which I had discovered, his Translation of Lobo's *Account of Abyssinia*, which Sir John Pringle had lent me, it being then little known as one of his works.[1] He said, 'Take no notice of it,' or 'don't talk of it.' He seemed to think it beneath him, though done at six-and-twenty. I said to him, 'Your style, sir, is much improved since you translated this.' He answered with a sort of triumphant smile, 'Sir, I hope it is.'

On Wednesday, April 3, in the morning, I found him very busy putting his books in order, and as they were generally very old ones, clouds of dust were flying around him. He had on a pair of large gloves such as hedgers use. His present appearance put me in mind of my uncle Dr. Boswell's description of him, 'A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries.'

I gave him an account of a conversation which had passed between me and Captain Cook, the day before, at dinner at Sir John Pringle's; and he was much pleased with the conscientious accuracy of that celebrated circumnavigator, who set me right as to many of the exaggerated accounts given by Dr. Hawkesworth of his voyages. I told him that while I was with the captain, I catched the enthusiasm of curiosity and adventure, and felt a strong inclination to go with him on his next voyage. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a man *does* feel so, till he considers how very little he can learn from such voyages.' BOSWELL: 'But one

[1] [It is still frequently sold under the name of *Le Grand*, the French translator, without any reference to the fact that the English translation is Johnson's, and the preface as characteristic a bit of Johnsonese as is anywhere to be found.—A. B.]

is carried away with the general, grand, and indistinct notion of a voyage round the world.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, but a man is to guard himself against taking a thing in general.' I said I was certain that a great part of what we are told by the travellers to the South Sea must be conjecture, because they had not enough of the language of those countries to understand so much as they have related. Objects falling under the observation of the senses might be clearly known; but everything intellectual, everything abstract—politics, morals, and religion, must be darkly guessed. Dr. Johnson was of the same opinion. He upon another occasion, when a friend mentioned to him several extraordinary facts, as communicated to him by the circumnavigators, slyly observed, 'Sir, I never before knew how much I was respected by these gentlemen; they told *me* none of these things.'

He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea Islands, after he had been some time in this country. He was struck with the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus: 'Sir, he had passed his time, while in England, only in the best company; so that all that he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, sir, Lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham; they sat with their backs to the light fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly: and there was so little of the savage in Omai, that I was afraid to speak to either, lest I should mistake one for the other.'

We agreed to dine to-day at the Mitre tavern, after the rising of the House of Lords, where a branch of the litigation concerning the Douglas estate, in which

I was one of the counsel, was to come on. I brought with me Mr. Murray, Solicitor-General of Scotland, now one of the judges of the Court of Session, with the title of Lord Henderland. I mentioned Mr. Solicitor's relation, Lord Charles Hay, with whom I knew Dr. Johnson had been acquainted. JOHNSON: 'I wrote something for Lord Charles; and I thought he had nothing to fear from a court-martial. I suffered a great loss when he died; he was a mighty pleasing man in conversation, and a reading man. The character of a soldier is high. They who stand forth the foremost in danger, for the community, have the respect of mankind. An officer is much more respected than any other man who has as little money. In a commercial country, money will always purchase respect. But you find an officer, who has, properly speaking, no money, is everywhere well received and treated with attention. The character of a soldier always stands him in stead.' BOSWELL: 'Yet, sir, I think that common soldiers are worse thought of than other men in the same rank of life; such as labourers.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a common soldier is usually a very gross man, and any quality which procures respect may be overwhelmed by grossness. A man of learning may be so vicious or so ridiculous that you cannot respect him. A common soldier, too, generally eats more than he can pay for. But when a common soldier is civil in his quarters, his red coat procures him a degree of respect.' The peculiar respect paid to the military character in France was mentioned. BOSWELL: 'I should think that where military men are so numerous, they would be less valued as not being rare.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir,

wherever a particular character or profession is high in the estimation of a people, those who are of it will be valued above other men. We value an Englishman high in this country, and yet Englishmen are not rare in it.'

Mr. Murray praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good humour with which those of different sects disputed with each other. JOHNSON: 'Sir, they disputed with good humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. Had the ancients been serious in their belief, we should not have had their gods exhibited in the manner we find them represented in the poets. The people would not have suffered it. They disputed with good humour upon the fanciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them: when a man has nothing to lose, he may be in good humour with his opponent. Accordingly you see in Lucian, the Epicurean, who argues only negatively, keeps his temper; the Stoic, who has something positive to preserve, grows angry. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value, is a necessary consequence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man who attacks my belief, diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy; and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy. Those only who believed in revelation have been angry at having their faith called in question; because they only had something upon which they could rest as matter of fact.' MURRAY: 'It seems to me that we are not angry with a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value; we rather pity him.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, to be sure, when you

wish a man to have that belief which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind; but our primary consideration would be to take care of ourselves. We should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, sir; every man will dispute with great good humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very good humour with him.' I added this illustration, 'If a man endeavours to convince me that my wife, whom I love very much, and in whom I place great confidence, is a disagreeable woman, and is even unfaithful to me, I shall be very angry, for he is putting me in fear of being unhappy.' MURRAY: 'But, sir, truth will always bear an examination.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, but it is painful to be forced to defend it. Consider, sir, how should you like, though conscious of your innocence, to be tried before a jury for a capital crime, once a week.'

We talked of education at great schools; the advantages and disadvantages of which Johnson displayed in a luminous manner; but his arguments preponderate so much in favour of the benefit which a boy of good parts might receive at one of them, that I have reason to believe Mr. Murray was very much influenced by what he had heard to-day, in his determination to send his own son to Westminster school. I have acted in the same manner with regard to my

own two sons; having placed the eldest at Eton, and the second at Westminster. I cannot say which is best. But in justice to both these noble seminaries, I with high satisfaction declare, that my boys have derived from them a great deal of good, and no evil, and I trust they will, like Horace, be grateful to their father for giving them so valuable an education.

I introduced the topic, which is often ignorantly urged, that the universities of England are too rich;[1] so that learning does not flourish in them as it would do, if those who teach had smaller salaries, and depended on their assiduity for a great part of their income. JOHNSON: 'Sir, the very reverse of this is the truth; the English universities are not rich enough. Our fellowships are only sufficient to support a man during his studies to fit him for the world, and accordingly in general they are held no longer than till an opportunity offers of getting away. Now and then, perhaps, there is a fellow who grows old in his college; but this is against his will, unless he be a man very indolent indeed. A hundred a year is reckoned a good fellowship, and that is no more than is necessary to keep a man decently as a scholar. We do not allow our fellows to marry, because we consider academical institutions as preparatory to a settlement in the world. It is only by being employed as a tutor, that a fellow can obtain anything more than a livelihood. To be sure a man

[1] Dr. Adam Smith, who was for some time a professor in the University of Glasgow, has uttered, in his *Wealth of Nations*, some reflections upon this subject which are certainly not well founded, and seem to be invidious.

who has enough without teaching, will probably not teach; for we would all be idle if we could. In the same manner, a man who is to get nothing by teaching, will not exert himself. Gresham College was intended as a place of instruction for London; able professors were to read lectures gratis; they contrived to have no scholars; whereas, if they had been allowed to receive but sixpence a lecture from each scholar, they would have been emulous to have had many scholars. Everybody will agree that it should be the interest of those who teach to have scholars; and this is the case in our universities. That they are too rich is certainly not true; for they have nothing good enough to keep a man of eminent learning with them for his life. In the foreign universities a professorship is a high thing. It is as much almost as a man can make by his learning; and therefore we find the most learned men abroad are in the universities. It is not so with us. Our universities are impoverished of learning by the penury of their provisions. I wish there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford, to keep first-rate men of learning from quitting the university.' Undoubtedly, if this were the case, literature would have a still greater dignity and splendour at Oxford, and there would be grander living sources of instruction.

I mentioned Mr. Maclaurin's uneasiness on account of a degree of ridicule carelessly thrown on his deceased father in Goldsmith's *History of Animated Nature,* in which that celebrated mathematician is represented as being subject to fits of yawning so violent as to render him incapable of proceeding in his lecture; a story altogether unfounded, but for the

publication of which the law would give no reparation.[1] This led us to agitate the question, whether legal redress could be obtained, even when a man's deceased relation was calumniated in a publication. Mr. Murray maintained there should be reparation, unless the author could justify himself by proving the fact. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is of so much more consequence that truth should be told than that individuals should not be made uneasy, that it is much better that the law does not restrain writing freely concerning the characters of the dead. Damages will be given to a man who is calumniated in his lifetime, because he may be hurt in his worldly interest, or at least hurt in his mind; but the law does not regard that uneasiness which a man feels on having his ancestor calumniated. That is too nice. Let him deny what is said, and let the matter have a fair chance by discussion. But if a man could say nothing against a character but what he can prove, history could not be written; for a great deal is known of men of which proof cannot be brought. A minister may be notoriously known to take bribes, and yet you may not be able to prove it.' Mr. Murray suggested that the author should be obliged to show some sort of evidence, though he would not require a strict legal proof: but Johnson firmly and resolutely opposed any restraint whatever, as adverse to a free investigation of the characters of mankind.[2]

[1] Dr. Goldsmith was dead before Mr. Maclaurin discovered the ludicrous error. But Mr. Nourse, the bookseller, who was the proprietor of the work, upon being applied to by Sir John Pringle, agreed very handsomely to have the leaf on which it was contained, cancelled, and reprinted without it, at his own expense.

[2] What Dr. Johnson has here said is undoubtedly good sense; yet I am afraid that law, though defined by Lord Coke 'the perfection of reason,' is not altogether *with him*; for it is held in the books, that an

On Thursday, April 4, having called on Dr. Johnson, I said it was a pity that truth was not so firm as to bid defiance to all attacks, so that it might be shot at as much as people choose to attempt, and yet remain unhurt. JOHNSON: 'Then, sir, it would not be shot at. Nobody attempts to dispute that two and two make four; but with contests concerning moral truth, human passions are generally mixed, and therefore it must ever be liable to assault and misrepresentation.'

On Friday, April 5, being Good Friday, after having attended the morning service at St. Clement's Church, I walked home with Johnson. We talked of the Roman Catholic religion. JOHNSON: 'In the barbarous ages, sir, priests and people were equally deceived; but afterwards there were gross corruptions introduced by the clergy, such as indulgences to

attack on the reputation even of a dead man, may be punished as a libel, because tending to a breach of the peace. There is, however, I believe, no modern decided case to that effect. In the King's Bench, Trinity Term, 1790, the question occurred on occasion of an indictment, the *King* v. *Topham*, who, as a *proprietor* of a newspaper, entitled *The World*, was found guilty of a libel against Earl Cowper, deceased, because certain injurious charges against his Lordship were published in that paper. An arrest of judgment having been moved for, the case was afterwards solemnly argued. My friend, Mr. Const, whom I delight in having an opportunity to praise, not only for his abilities but his manners—a gentleman whose ancient German blood has been mellowed in England, and who may be truly said to unite the *Baron* and the *Barrister*—was one of the Counsel for Mr. Topham. He displayed much learning and ingenuity upon the general question; which, however, was not decided, as the Court granted an arrest chiefly on the informality of the indictment.

[In *The Queen* v. *Labouchere*, 12 Law Reports, Queen's Bench Division 320, the judges inclined to the opinion that it is not a crime to libel the dead, and certainly no civil action will lie; but it may be that the old common law which treated a libel on the dead as a misdemeanour punishable, not by way of criminal information, but by indictment with fine and punishment, is still effectual; but in such a case it must be alleged and proved that the defamatory words were published or uttered with intent to bring contempt and scandal on the deceased's family, and so provoke a breach of the peace.—*See* Odgers on *Libel and Slander*, 444.—A. B.]

priests to have concubines, and the worship of images, not indeed inculcated, but knowingly permitted.' He strongly censured the licensed stews at Rome. BOSWELL: 'So then, sir, you would allow no irregular intercourse whatever between the sexes?' JOHNSON: 'To be sure I would not, sir. I would punish it much more than it is done, and so restrain it. In all countries there has been fornication, as in all countries there has been theft; but there may be more or less of the one, as well as of the other, in proportion to the force of law. All men will naturally commit fornication, as all men will naturally steal. And, sir, it is very absurd to argue, as has been often done, that prostitutes are necessary to prevent the violent effects of appetite from violating the decent order of life; nay, should be permitted, in order to preserve the chastity of our wives and daughters. Depend upon it, sir, severe laws, steadily enforced, would be sufficient against those evils, and would promote marriage.'

I stated to him this case: 'Suppose a man has a daughter, who he knows has been seduced, but her misfortune is concealed from the world; should he keep her in his house? Would he not, by doing so, be accessory to imposition? And, perhaps a worthy, unsuspecting man might come and marry this woman, unless the father inform him of the truth.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, he is accessory to no imposition. His daughter is in his house; and if a man courts her, he takes his chance. If a friend, or indeed if any man, asks his opinion whether he should marry her, he ought to advise him against it, without telling why, because his real opinion is then required. Or, if he has other

daughters who know of her frailty, he ought not to keep her in his house. You are to consider the state of life is this: we are to judge of one another's character as well as we can; and a man is not bound in honesty or honour to tell us the faults of his daughter or of himself. A man who has debauched his friend's daughter is not obliged to say to everybody, "Take care of me; don't let me enter your house without suspicion: I once debauched a friend's daughter,—I may debauch yours."'

Mr. Thrale called upon him, and appeared to bear the loss of his son with a manly composure. There was no affectation about him; and he talked, as usual, upon indifferent subjects. He seemed to me to hesitate as to the intended Italian tour, on which, I flattered myself, he and Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson were soon to set out; and, therefore, I pressed it as much as I could. I mentioned that Mr. Beauclerk had said that Baretti, whom they were to carry with them would keep them so long in the little towns of his own district, that they would not have time to see Rome. I mentioned this to put them on their guard. JOHNSON: 'Sir, we do not thank Mr. Beauclerk for supposing that we are to be directed by Baretti. No, sir; Mr. Thrale is to go, by my advice, to Mr. Jackson[1] (the all-knowing), and get from him a plan for seeing the most that can be seen in the time that we have to travel. We must, to be sure, see Rome, Naples, Florence, and Venice, and as much more as we can' (speaking with a tone of animation).

[1] A gentleman, who, from his extraordinary stores of knowledge, has been styled *omniscient*. Johnson, I think very properly, altered it to all-knowing, as it is a *verbum solenne*, appropriated to the Supreme Being.

When I expressed an earnest wish for his remarks on Italy, he said, 'I do not see that I could make a book upon Italy; yet I should be glad to get £200 or £500 by such a work.' This showed both that a journal of his tour on the Continent was not wholly out of his contemplation, and that he uniformly adhered to that strange opinion which his indolent disposition made him utter: 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.' Numerous instances to refute this will occur to all who are versed in the history of literature.

He gave us some of the many sketches of character which were treasured in his mind, and which he was wont to produce quite unexpectedly in a very entertaining manner. 'I lately (said he) received a letter from the East Indies, from a gentleman whom I formerly knew very well; he had returned from that country with a handsome fortune, as it was reckoned, before means were found to acquire those immense sums which have been brought from thence of late; he was a scholar, and an agreeable man, and lived very prettily in London, till his wife died. After her death, he took to dissipation and gaming, and lost all he had. One evening he lost £1000 to a gentleman whose name I am sorry I have forgotten. Next morning he sent the gentleman £500, with an apology that it was all he had in the world. The gentleman sent the money back to him, declaring he would not accept it; and adding, that if Mr. —— had occasion for £500 more, he would lend it to him. He resolved to go out again to the East Indies, and make his fortune anew. He got a considerable appointment, and I had some intention of accompanying him. Had I thought

then as I do now, I should have gone: but at that time I had objections to quitting England.'

It was a very remarkable circumstance about Johnson, whom shallow observers have supposed to have been ignorant of the world, that very few men had seen greater variety of characters; and none could observe them better, as was evident from the strong, yet nice portraits which he often drew. I have frequently thought that if he had made out what the French call *une catalogue raisonnée* of all the people who had passed under his observation, it would have afforded a very rich fund of instruction and entertainment. The suddenness with which his accounts of some of them started out in conversation, was not less pleasing than surprising. I remember he once observed to me, 'It is wonderful, sir, what is to be found in London. The most literary conversation that I ever enjoyed was at the table of Jack Ellis, a money-scrivener behind the Royal Exchange, with whom I at one period used to dine generally once a week.'[1]

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[1] This Mr. Ellis was, I believe, the last of that profession called *scriveners*, which is one of the London companies, but of which the business is no longer carried on separately, but is transacted by attorneys and others. He was a man of literature and talents. He was the author of a Hudibrastic version of Maphæus's Canto, in addition to the *Æneid*; of some poems of Dodsley's Collections; and various other small pieces; but being a very modest man, never put his name to anything. He showed me a translation which he had made of Ovid's *Epistles*, very prettily done. There is a good engraved portrait of him by Pether, from a picture by Fry, which hangs in the hall of the Scriveners' Company. I visited him October 4, 1790, in his ninety-third year, and found his judgment distinct and clear, and his memory, though faded so as to fail him occasionally, yet, as he assured me, and I indeed perceived, able to serve him very well, after a little recollection. It was agreeable to observe that he was free from the discontent and fretfulness which too often molest old age. He in the summer of that year walked to Rotherhithe, where he dined, and walked home in the evening. He died on the 31st of December 1791.

Volumes would be required to contain a list of his numerous and various acquaintance, none of whom he ever forgot; and could describe and discriminate them all with precision and vivacity. He associated with persons the most widely different in manners, abilities, rank, and accomplishments. He was at once the companion of the brilliant Colonel Forrester of the Guards, who wrote the *Polite Philosopher*, and of the awkward and uncouth Robert Levet; of Lord Thurlow, and Mr. Sastres, the Italian master; and has dined one day with the beautiful, gay, and fascinating Lady Craven,[1] and the next with good Mrs. Gardiner, the tallow-chandler, on Snow Hill.

On my expressing my wonder at his discovering so much of the knowledge peculiar to different professions, he told me, 'I learned what I know of law chiefly from Mr. Ballow,[2] a very able man. I learned some too from Chambers; but was not so teachable then. One is not willing to be taught by a young man.' When I expressed a wish to know more about Mr. Ballow, Johnson said, 'Sir, I have seen him but once these twenty years. The tide of life has driven us different ways.' I was sorry at the time to hear this; but whoever quits the creeks of private connec-

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1 Lord Macartney, who, with his other distinguished qualities, is remarkable also for an elegant pleasantry, told me that he met Johnson at Lady Craven's, and that he seemed jealous of any interference: 'So (said his Lordship, smiling), *I kept back*.'

2 There is an account of him in Sir John Hawkins' *Life of Johnson*, p. 244.

[Mr. Thomas Ballow was author of an excellent *Treatise of Equity*, printed anonymously in 1742, and lately republished with very valuable additions, by John Fonblanque, Esq.

Mr. Ballow died suddenly in London, July 26, 1782, aged seventy-five, and is mentioned in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that year as 'a great Greek scholar, and famous for his knowledge of the old philosophy.'—M.]

tions, and fairly gets into the great ocean of London, will, by imperceptible degrees, unavoidably experience such cessations of acquaintance.

'My knowledge of physic (he added) I learned from Dr. James, whom I helped in writing the proposals for his Dictionary, and also a little in the Dictionary itself.[1] I also learned from Dr. Lawrence, but was then grown more stubborn.'

A curious incident happened to-day, while Mr. Thrale and I sat with him. Francis announced that a large packet was brought to him from the post-office, said to have come from Lisbon, and it was charged £7, 10s. He would not receive it, supposing it to be some trick, nor did he even look at it. But upon inquiry afterwards, he found that it was a real packet for him from that very friend in the East Indies of whom he had been speaking; and the ship which carried it having come to Portugal, this packet, with others, had been put into the post-office at Lisbon.

I mentioned a new gaming club, of which Mr. Beauclerk had given me an account, where the members played to a desperate extent. JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, this is mere talk. *Who* is ruined by gaming? You will not find six instances in an age. There is a strange rout made about deep play: whereas you have many more people ruined by adventurous trade, and yet we do not hear such an outcry against it.' THRALE: 'There may be few people absolutely ruined by deep play; but very many are much hurt in their circumstances by it.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, and so are very many by other kinds of

[1] I have in vain endeavoured to find out what parts Johnson wrote for Dr. James. Perhaps medical men may.

expense.' I had heard him talk once before in the same manner; and at Oxford he said, 'he wished he had learned to play at cards.' The truth, however, is, that he loved to display his ingenuity in argument, and therefore would sometimes in conversation maintain opinions which he was sensible were wrong, but in supporting which his reasoning and wit would be most conspicuous. He would begin thus: 'Why, sir, as to the good or evil of card-playing——' 'Now (said Garrick), he is thinking which side he shall take.' He appeared to have a pleasure in contradiction, especially when any opinion whatever was delivered with an air of confidence; so that there was hardly any topic, if not one of the great truths of religion and morality, that he might not have been incited to argue, either for or against. Lord Elibank[1] had the highest admiration of his powers. He once observed to me, 'Whatever opinion Johnson maintains I will not say that he convinces me, but he never fails to show me that he has good reasons for it.' I have heard Johnson pay his Lordship this high compliment:

'I never was in Lord Elibank's company without learning something.'

We sat together till it was too late for the afternoon service. Thrale said, he had come with intention to go to church with us. We went at seven to evening prayers at St. Clement's Church, after having drunk coffee—an indulgence, which I understood Johnson yielded to on this occasion, in compliment to Thrale.

On Sunday, April 7, Easter Day, after having been

[1] Patrick, Lord Elibank, who died in 1778.

at St. Paul's Cathedral, I came to Dr. Johnson, according to my usual custom. It seemed to me that there was always something peculiarly mild and placid in his manner upon this holy festival, the commemoration of the most joyful event in the history of our world, the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, who, having triumphed over death and the grave, proclaimed immortality to mankind.

I repeated to him an argument of a lady of my acquaintance, who maintained, that her husband's having been guilty of numberless infidelities, released her from conjugal obligations, because they were reciprocal. JOHNSON: 'This is miserable stuff, sir. To the contract of marriage, besides the man and wife, there is a third party—society; and if it be considered as a vow—God: and, therefore, it cannot be dissolved by their consent alone. Laws are not made for particular cases, but for men in general. A woman may be unhappy with her husband, but she cannot be freed from him without the approbation of the civil and ecclesiastical power. A man may be unhappy, because he is not so rich as another; but he is not to seize upon another's property with his own hand.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, this lady does not want that the contract should be dissolved; she only argues that she may indulge herself in gallantries with equal freedom as her husband does, provided she takes care not to introduce a spurious issue into his family. You know, sir, what Macrobius has told of Julia.'[1] JOHNSON: 'This lady of yours, sir, I think, is very fit for a brothel.'

[1] 'Nunquam enim nisi navi plena tollo vectorem.'—Lib. ii. c. vi.

Mr. Macbean, author of the *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, came in. He mentioned that he had been forty years absent from Scotland. 'Ah, Boswell! (said Johnson, smiling), what would you give to be forty years from Scotland?' I said, 'I should not like to be so long absent from the seat of my ancestors.' This gentleman, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Levett, dined with us.

Dr. Johnson made a remark, which both Mr. Macbean and I thought new. It was this: that 'the law against usury is for the protection of creditors as well as debtors; for if there were no such check, people would be apt, from the temptation of great interest, to lend to desperate persons, by whom they would lose their money. Accordingly there are instances of ladies being ruined, by having injudiciously sunk their fortunes for high annuities, which, after a few years, ceased to be paid, in consequence of the ruined circumstances of the borrower.'

Mrs. Williams was very peevish; and I wondered at Johnson's patience with her now, as I had often done on similar occasions. The truth is, that his humane consideration of the forlorn and indigent state in which this lady was left by her father, induced him to treat her with the utmost tenderness, and even to be desirous of procuring her amusement, so as sometimes to incommode many of his friends, by carrying her with him to their houses, where, from her manner of eating, in consequence of her blindness, she could not but offend the delicacy of persons of nice sensations.

After coffee, we went to afternoon service in St.

Clement's Church. Observing some beggars in the street as we walked along, I said to him I supposed there was no civilised country in the world, where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people was prevented. JOHNSON: 'I believe, sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality.'

When the service was ended, I went home with him, and we sat quietly by ourselves. He recommended Dr. Cheyne's books. I said, I thought Cheyne had been reckoned whimsical. 'So he was (said he) in some things; but there is no end of objections. There are few books to which some objection or other may not be made.' He added, 'I would not have you read anything else of Cheyne, but his book on Health, and his *English Malady*.'

Upon the question whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to force himself into solitude and sadness? JOHNSON: 'No, sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people, gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy, till, in order to be relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgences.'

On Wednesday, April 10, I dined with him at Mr. Thrale's, where were Mr. Murphy and some other company. Before dinner, Dr. Johnson and I passed some time by ourselves. I was sorry to find it was now resolved that the proposed journey to Italy should not take place this year. He said, 'I am disappointed, to be sure; but it is not a great disappointment.' I wondered to see him bear, with a philosophical calm-

ness, what would have made most people peevish and fretful. I perceived, however, that he had so warmly cherished the hope of enjoying classical scenes, that he could not easily part with the scheme; for he said, 'I shall probably contrive to get to Italy some other way. But I won't mention it to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, as it might vex them.' I suggested, that going to Italy might have done Mr. and Mrs. Thrale good. JOHNSON: 'I rather believe not, sir. While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be *digested*, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it.'

At dinner, Mr. Murphy entertained us with the history of Mr. Joseph Simpson, a schoolfellow of Dr. Johnson's, a barrister-at-law, of good parts, but who fell into a dissipated course of life, incompatible with that success in his profession which he once had, and would otherwise have deservedly maintained; yet he still preserved a dignity in his deportment. He wrote a tragedy on the story of Leonidas, entitled *The Patriot*. He read it to a company of lawyers, who found so many faults that he wrote it over again: so then there were two tragedies on the same subject and with the same title. Dr. Johnson told us, that one of them was still in his possession. This very piece was, after his death, published by some person who had been about him, and, for the sake of a little hasty profit, was fallaciously advertised, so as to make it be believed to have been written by Johnson himself.

I said I disliked the custom which some people had of bringing their children into company, because it in a manner forced us to pay foolish compliments to please

their parents. JOHNSON: 'You are right, sir. We may be excused for not caring much about other people's children, for there are many who care very little about their own children. It may be observed, that men, who from being engaged in business, or from their course of life in whatever way, seldom see their children, do not care much about them. I myself should not have had much fondness for a child of my own.' Mrs. THRALE: 'Nay, sir, how can you talk so?' JOHNSON: 'At least, I never wished to have a child.'

Mr. Murphy mentioned Dr. Johnson's having a design to publish an edition of Cowley. Johnson said, he did not know but he should; and he expressed his disapprobation of Dr. Hurd, for having published a mutilated edition under the title of *Select Works of Abraham Cowley*. Mr. Murphy thought it a bad precedent; observing, that any author might be used in the same manner; and that it was pleasing to see the variety of an author's compositions, at different periods.

We talked of Flatman's poems; and Mrs. Thrale observed, that Pope had partly borrowed from him, 'The Dying Christian to his Soul.' Johnson repeated Rochester's verses upon Flatman, which I think by much too severe:

> 'Nor that slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,
> Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,
> And rides a jaded Muse, whipt with loose reins.'

I like to recollect all the passages that I heard Johnson repeat; it stamps a value on them.

He told us that the book entitled the *Lives of the Poets*, by Mr. Cibber, was entirely supplied by Mr.

Shiels,[1] a Scotchman, one of his amanuenses. 'The booksellers (said he) gave Theophilus Cibber, who was then in prison, ten guineas to allow *Mr. Cibber* to be put upon the title-page, as the author; by this a double imposition was intended: in the first place, that it was the work of a Cibber at all; and, in the second place, that it was the work of old Cibber.'

Mr. Murphy said, that 'The *Memoirs* of Gray's Life set him much higher in his estimation than his poems did; for you there saw a man constantly at work in literature.' Johnson acquiesced in this; but depreciated the book, I thought very unreasonably.

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[1] In the *Monthly Review* for May 1792, there is such a correction of the above passage, as I should think myself very culpable not to subjoin. 'This account is very inaccurate. The following statement of facts we know to be true, in every material circumstance:—Shiels was the principal collector and digester of the materials for the work: but as he was very raw in authorship, an indifferent writer in prose, and his language full of Scotticisms, Cibber, who was a clever, lively fellow, and then soliciting employment among the booksellers, was engaged to correct the style and diction of the whole work, then intended to make only four volumes, with power to alter, expunge, or add, as he liked. He was also to supply *notes*, occasionally, especially concerning those dramatic poets with whom he had been chiefly conversant. He also engaged to write several of the Lives; which (as we are told) he accordingly performed. He was further useful in striking out the Jacobitical and Tory sentiments, which Shiels had industriously interspersed wherever he could bring them in:—and as the success of the work appeared, after all, very doubtful, he was content with £21 for his labour, besides a few sets of the books, to disperse among his friends.—Shiels had nearly £70, besides the advantage of many of the best Lives in the work being communicated by friends to the undertaking; and for which Mr. Shiels had the same consideration as for the rest, being paid by the sheet, for the whole. He was, however, so angry with his Whiggish supervisor (THE., like his father, being a violent stickler for the political principles which prevailed in the reign of George the Second), for so unmercifully mutilating his copy and scouting his politics, that he wrote Cibber a challenge: but was prevented from sending it, by the publisher, who fairly laughed him out of his fury. The proprietors, too, were discontented, in the end, on account of Mr. Cibber's unexpected industry; for his corrections and alterations in the proof-sheets were so numerous and considerable, that the printer made for them a grievous addition to his bill; and, in fine, all parties were dissatisfied. On the whole, the work was productive of no profit to the undertakers, who had agreed, in case of success, to make Cibber a present of some addition to the twenty guineas which

For he said, 'I forced myself to read it, only because it was a common topic of conversation. I found it mighty dull; and, as to the style, it is fit for the second table.' Why he thought so I was at a loss to conceive. He now gave it as his opinion, that 'Akenside was a superior poet both to Gray and Mason.'

Talking of the Reviews, Johnson said, 'I think them very impartial: I do not know an instance of partiality. He mentioned what had passed upon the subject of the *Monthly* and *Critical Reviews*, in the conversation with which his Majesty had honoured him. He expatiated a little more on them this evening.

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he had received, and for which his receipt is now in the bookseller's hands. We are further assured, that he actually obtained an additional sum; when he, soon after (in the year 1758), unfortunately embarked for Dublin, on an engagement for one of the theatres there; but the ship was cast away and every person on board perished. There were about sixty passengers, among whom was the Earl of Drogheda, with many other persons of consequence and property.

'As to the alleged design of making the compliment pass for the work of old Mr. Cibber, the charges seem to have been founded on a somewhat uncharitable construction. We are assured that the thought was not harboured by some of the proprietors, who are still living; and we hope that it did not occur to the first designer of the work, who was also the printer of it, and who bore a respectable character.

'We have been induced to enter thus circumstantially into the foregoing detail of facts relating to the *Lives of the Poets*, compiled by Messrs. Cibber and Shiels, from a sincere regard to that sacred principle of truth, to which Dr. Johnson so rightly adhered, according to the best of his knowledge; and which, we believe, *no consideration* would have prevailed on him to violate. In regard to the matter, which we now dismiss, he had, no doubt, been misled by partial and wrong information: Shiels was the Doctor's amanuensis; he had quarrelled with Cibber; it is natural to suppose that he told his story in his own way; and it is certain that he was not "a very sturdy moralist."' This explanation appears to me very satisfactory. It is, however, to be observed, that the story told by Johnson does not rest solely upon my record of his conversation; for he himself has published it in his *Life of Hammond*, where he says, 'the manuscript of Shiels is now in my possession.' Very probably he had trusted to Shiels's word, and never looked at it so as to compare it with the *Lives of the Poets*, as published under Mr. Cibber's name. What became of that manuscript I know not. I should have liked much to examine it. I suppose it was thrown into the fire in that impetuous combustion of papers, which Johnson I think rashly executed, when *moribundus*.

'The *Monthly Reviewers* (said he) are not Deists; but they are Christians with as little Christianity as may be; and are for pulling down all establishments. The *Critical Reviewers* are for supporting the constitution both in church and state. The *Critical Reviewers*, I believe, often review without reading the books through; but lay hold of a topic, and write chiefly from their own minds. The *Monthly Reviewers* are duller men, and are glad to read the books through.'

He talked of Lord Lyttelton's extreme anxiety as an author; observing that 'he was thirty years in preparing his History, and that he employed a man to point it for him; as if (laughing) another man could point his sense better than himself.' Mr. Murphy said he understood his History was kept back several years for fear of Smollett. JOHNSON: 'This seems strange to Murphy and me, who never felt that anxiety, but sent what we wrote to the press, and let it take its chance.' MRS. THRALE: 'The time has been, sir, when you felt it.' JOHNSON: 'Why really, madam, I do not recollect a time when that was the case.'

Talking of the *Spectator*, he said, 'It is wonderful that there is such a proportion of bad papers in the half of the work which was not written by Addison; for there was all the world to write that half, yet not a half of that half is good. One of the finest pieces in the English language is the paper on Novelty, yet we do not hear it talked of. It was written by Grove, a dissenting *teacher*.' He would not, I perceived, call him a *clergyman*, though he was candid enough to allow very great merit to his composition. Mr. Murphy said he remembered when there were several

people alive in London who enjoyed a considerable reputation merely from having written a paper in the *Spectator*. He mentioned particularly Mr. Ince, who used to frequent Tom's coffee-house. 'But (said Johnson), you must consider how highly Steele speaks of Mr. Ince.' He would not allow that the paper on carrying a boy to travel, signed *Philip Homebred*, which was reported to be written by the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, had merit. He said, 'It was quite vulgar, and had nothing luminous.'

Johnson mentioned Dr. Barry's[1] System of Physic. 'He was a man (said he) who had acquired a high reputation in Dublin, came over to England, and brought his reputation with him, but had not great success. His notion was, that pulsation occasions death by attrition; and that, therefore, the way to preserve life is to retard pulsation. But we know that pulsation is strongest in infants, and that we increase in growth while it operates in its regular course; so it cannot be the cause of destruction.' Soon after this, he said something very flattering to Mrs. Thrale, which I do not recollect; but it concluded with wishing her long life. 'Sir (said I), if Dr. Barry's system be true, you have now shortened Mrs. Thrale's life, perhaps, some minutes, by accelerating her pulsation.'

On Thursday, April 11, I dined with him at General Paoli's, in whose house I now resided, and where I had ever afterwards the honour of being entertained with the kindest attention as his constant guest, while I was in London, till I had a house of my

[1] Sir Edward Barry, Baronet.

own there. I mentioned my having that morning introduced to Mr. Garrick, Count Neni, a Flemish nobleman of great rank and fortune, to whom Garrick talked of Abel Drugger as *a small part*; and related, with pleasant vanity, that a Frenchman who had seen him in one of his low characters, exclaimed, '*Comment! je ne crois pas. Ce n'est pas Monsieur Garrick, ce grand homme!*' Garrick added, with an appearance of grave recollection, 'If I were to begin life again, I think I should not play these low characters.' Upon which I observed, 'Sir, you would be in the wrong; for your great excellence is your variety of playing, your representing so well characters so very different.' JOHNSON: 'Garrick, sir, was not in earnest in what he said; for, to be sure, his peculiar excellence is his variety; and, perhaps there is not any one character which has not been as well acted by somebody else, as he could do it.' BOSWELL: 'Why then, sir, did he talk so?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, to make you answer as you did.' BOSWELL: 'I don't know, sir; he seemed to dip deep into his mind for the reflection.' JOHNSON: 'He had not far to dip, sir: he had said the same thing, probably, twenty times before.'

Of a nobleman raised at a very early period to high office, he said, 'His parts, sir, are pretty well for a Lord; but would not be distinguished in a man who had nothing else but his parts.'[1]

A journey to Italy was still in his thoughts. He said, 'A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of

[1] [Lord Shelburne.—A. B.]

travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great Empires of the world; the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.' The General observed that 'The Mediterranean would be a noble subject for a poem.'

We talked of translation. I said I could not define it, nor could I think of a similitude to illustrate it; but that it appeared to me the translation of poetry could be only imitation. JOHNSON: 'You may translate books of science exactly. You may also translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve the languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language, if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.'

A gentleman maintained that the art of printing had hurt real learning, by disseminating idle writings. JOHNSON: 'Sir, if it had not been for the art of printing, we should now have no learning at all; for books would have perished faster than they could have been transcribed.' This observation seems not just, considering for how many ages books were preserved by writing alone.

The same gentleman maintained that a general diffusion of knowledge among a people was a disadvantage, for it made the vulgar rise above their

humble sphere. JOHNSON: 'Sir, while knowledge is a distinction, those who are possessed of it will naturally rise above those who are not. Merely to read and write was a distinction at first; but we see when reading and writing have become general, the common people keep their stations. And so, were higher attainments to become general, the effect would be the same.'

'Goldsmith (he said) referred everything to vanity; his virtues, and his vices too, were from that motive. He was not a social man. He never exchanged mind with you.'

We spent the evening at Mr. Hoole's. Mr. Mickle, the excellent translator of the *Lusiad*, was there. I have preserved little of the conversation of this evening. Dr. Johnson said, 'Thomson had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing everything in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes that the sense can hardly peep through. Shiels, who compiled Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, was one day sitting with me. I took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked,—Is not this fine? Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, "Well, sir (said I), I have omitted every other line."'

I related a dispute between Goldsmith and Mr. Robert Dodsley, one day when they and I were dining at Tom Davies's, in 1762. Goldsmith asserted that there was no poetry produced in this age. Dodsley appealed to his own collection, and maintained that though you could not find a palace like Dryden's 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' you had villages composed of very pretty houses; and he mentioned

particularly 'The Spleen.' JOHNSON: 'I think Dodsley gave up the question. He and Goldsmith said the same thing; only he said it in a softer manner than Goldsmith did; for he acknowledged that there was no poetry, nothing that towered above the common mark. You may find wit and humour in verse, and yet no poetry. "Hubidras" has a profusion of these; yet it is not to be reckoned a poem. "The Spleen," in Dodsley's collection, on which you say he chiefly rested, is not poetry.' BOSWELL: 'Does not Gray's poetry, sir, tower above the common mark?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would. Sixteen-string Jack[1] towered above the common mark.' BOSWELL: 'Then, sir, what is poetry?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not easy to *tell* what it is.'

On Friday, April 12, I dined with him at our friend Tom Davies's, where we met Mr. Cradock of Leicestershire, author of *Zobeide*, a tragedy; a very pleasing gentleman, to whom my friend Dr. Farmer's very excellent Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare is addressed; and Dr. Harwood, who has written and published various works, particularly a fantastical translation of the New Testament, in modern phrase, and with a Socinian twist.

I introduced Aristotle's doctrine in his *Art of Poetry* of 'the *κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων*, the purging of the

[1] A noted highwayman, who after having been several times tried and acquitted, was at last hanged. He was remarkable for foppery in his dress, and particularly for wearing a bunch of sixteen strings at the knees of his breeches.

passions,' as the purpose of tragedy. 'But how are the passions to be purged by terror and pity?' (said I, with an assumed air of ignorance, to incite him to talk, for which it was often necessary to employ some address). JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, you are to consider what is the meaning of purging in the original sense. It is to expel impurities from the human body. The mind is subject to the same imperfection. The passions are the greatest movers of human actions; but they are mixed with such impurities that it is necessary they should be purged or refined by means of terror and pity. For instance, ambition is a noble passion; but by seeing upon the stage that a man who is so excessively ambitious as to raise himself by injustice, is punished, we are terrified at the fatal consequences of such a passion. In the same manner a certain degree of resentment is necessary; but if we see that a man carries it too far, we pity the object of it, and are taught to moderate that passion.' My record upon this occasion does great injustice to Johnson's expression, which was so forcible and brilliant, that Mr. Cradock whispered to me, 'O that his words were written in a book!'

I observed the great defect of the tragedy of *Othello* was that it had not a moral; for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind. JOHNSON: 'In the first place, sir, we learn from *Othello* this very useful moral, not to make an unequal match; in the second place, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. The handkerchief is merely a trick, though a very pretty trick; but there are no other circumstances of reasonable suspicion, except what is related by Iago

of Cassio's warm expressions concerning Desdemona in his sleep; and that depended entirely upon the assertion of one man. No, sir, I think *Othello* has more moral than almost any play.'

Talking of a penurious gentleman of our acquaintance, Johnson said, 'Sir, he is narrow, not so much from avarice as from impotence to spend his money. He cannot find in his heart to pour out a bottle of wine; but he would not much care if it should sour.'

He said he wished to see John Dennis's critical works collected. Davies said they would not sell. Dr. Johnson seemed to think otherwise.

Davies said of a well-known dramatic author that 'he lived upon *potted stories*, and that he made his way as Hannibal did, by vinegar, having begun by attacking people, particularly the players.'

He reminded Dr. Johnson of Mr. Murphy's having paid him the highest compliment that ever was paid to a layman, by asking his pardon for repeating some oaths in the course of telling a story.

Johnson and I supped this evening at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, Mr. Nairne, now one of the Scotch judges, with the title of Lord Dunsinnan, and my very worthy friend, Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo.

We discussed the question whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did. JOHNSON: 'No, sir: before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty,

and grows impudent and vociferous, but he is not improved: he is only not sensible of his defects.' Sir Joshua said the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind by giving a proper circulation to the blood. 'I am (said he) in very good spirits when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up; and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity, but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken—nay, drunken is a coarse word—none of those *vinous* flights.' SIR JOSHUA: 'Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking.' JOHNSON: 'Perhaps contempt. And, sir, it is not necessary to be drunk oneself to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit, of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio, the most excellent in its kind, when we are quite sober? Wit is wit by whatever means it is produced; and, if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure: cock-fighting or bear-baiting will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking, as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. There are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been a very few men of talents who were improved by drinking; but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general: and let it be considered,

that there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man.' Sir William Forbes said, 'Might not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire?' 'Nay, sir (said Johnson, laughing), I cannot answer that: that is too much for me.'

I observed that wine did some people harm, by inflaming, confusing, and irritating their minds; but that the experience of mankind had declared in favour of moderate drinking. JOHNSON: 'Sir, I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits; in the second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me.'

He told us, 'almost all his *Ramblers* were written just as they were wanted for the press; that he sent a certain portion of the copy of an essay, and wrote the remainder while the former part of it was printing. When it was wanted, and he had fairly sat down to it, he was sure it would be done.'

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, 'What we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read.' He told us he read Fielding's *Amelia* through without

stopping.[1] He said, 'If a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it, to go to the beginning. He may, perhaps, not feel again the inclination.'

Sir Joshua mentioned Mr. Cumberland's *Odes*, which were just published. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, they would have been thought as good as odes commonly are, if Cumberland had not put his name to them; but a name immediately draws censure, unless it be a name that bears down everything before it. Nay, Cumberland has made his *Odes* subsidiary to the fame of another man.[2] They might have run well enough by themselves; but he has not only loaded them with a name, but has made them carry double.'

We talked of the Reviews, and Dr. Johnson spoke of them as he did at Thrale's. Sir Joshua said, what I have often thought, that he wondered to find so much good writing employed in them, when the authors were to remain unknown, and so could not have the motive of fame. JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, those who write in them write well in order to be paid well.'

Soon after this day, he went to Bath with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. I had never seen that beautiful city, and wished to take the opportunity of visiting it while Johnson was there. Having written to him, I received the following answer:

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Why do you talk of neglect? When did I neglect you? If you will come to Bath we shall all be glad to see you. Come, therefore, as soon as you can.

[1] We have here an involuntary testimony to the excellence of this admirable writer, to whom we have seen that Dr. Johnson *directly* allowed so little merit.

[2] Mr. Romney, the painter, who has now deservedly established a high reputation.

'But I have a little business for you at London. Bid Francis look in the paper drawer of the chest of drawers in my bed-chamber, for two cases; one for the Attorney-General, and one for the Solicitor-General. They lie, I think, at the top of my papers; otherwise they are somewhere else, and will give me more trouble.

'Please to write to me immediately if they can be found. Make my compliments to all our friends round the world, and to Mrs. Williams at home.—I am, sir, your, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'Search for the papers as soon as you can, that if it is necessary, I may write to you again before you come down.'

On the 26th of April, I went to Bath; and on my arrival at the Pelican inn, found lying for me an obliging invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, by whom I was agreeably entertained almost constantly during my stay. They were gone to the rooms; but there was a kind note from Dr. Johnson, that he should sit at home all the evening. I went to him directly, and before Mr. and Mrs. Thrale returned, we had, by ourselves, some hours of tea-drinking and talk.

I shall group together such of his sayings as I preserved during the few days that I was at Bath.

Of a person who differed from him in politics,[1] he said, 'In private life he is a very honest gentleman; but I will not allow him to be so in public life. People *may* be honest, though they are doing wrong: that is, between their Maker and them. But *we*, who are suffering by their pernicious conduct, are to destroy them. We are sure that —— acts from interest. We know what his genuine principles were. They who allow their passions to confound the distinctions

[1] [Probably Burke.—A. B.]

between right and wrong, are criminal. They may be convinced; but they have not come honestly by their conviction.'

It having been mentioned, I know not with what truth, that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge. JOHNSON: 'She is better employed at her toilet than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters.'[1]

He told us that 'Addison wrote Budgell's papers in the *Spectator*, at least mended them so much, that he made them almost his own; and that Draper, Tonson's partner, assured Mrs. Johnson, that the much admired Epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, which came out in Budgell's name, was in reality written by Addison.'

'The mode of government by one may be ill adapted to a small society, but is best for a great nation. The characteristic of our own government at present is imbecility. The magistrates dare not call the guards for fear of being hanged. The guards will not come for fear of being given up to the blind rage of popular juries.'[2]

Of the father of one of our friends, he observed, 'He never clarified his notions, by filtrating them through other minds. He had a canal upon his estate, where at one place the bank was too low. "I dug the canal deeper," said he.'

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[1] [Mrs. Macaulay.—A. B.]

[2] [The Gordon Riots in 1780 and the Bristol Riots in 1831 justify this observation. *See* Penney, *State Trials*, No. iii. p. 13.—A. B.]

He told me that 'so long ago as 1748 he had read *The Grave*, a poem,[1] but did not like it much.' I differed from him; for though it is not equal throughout, and is seldom elegantly correct, it abounds in solemn thought, and poetical imagery beyond the common reach. The world has differed from him; for the poem has passed through many editions, and is still much read by people of a serious cast of mind.

A literary lady[2] of large fortune was mentioned, as one who did good to many, but by no means 'by stealth,' and instead of 'blushing to find it fame,' acted evidently from vanity. JOHNSON: 'I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence as she does from whatever motive. If there are such under the earth, or in the clouds, I wish they would come up, or come down. What Soame Jenyns says upon this subject is not to be minded—he is a wit. No, sir; to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive.'

He would not allow me to praise a lady then at Bath; observing, 'She does not gain upon me, sir; I think her empty-headed.'[3] He was, indeed, a stern critic upon characters and manners. Even Mrs.

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[1] I am sorry that there are no memoirs of the Reverend Robert Blair, the author of this poem. He was the representative of the ancient family of Blair, of Blair, in Ayrshire, but the estate had descended to a female, and afterwards passed to the son of her husband by another marriage. He was minister of the parish of Athelstaneford, where Mr. John Home was his successor; so that it may truly be called classic ground. His son, who is of the same name, and a man eminent for talents and learning, is now, with universal approbation, Solicitor-General of Scotland.

[2] [Mrs. Montague.—A. B.]

[3] [Probably Miss Hannah More.—A. B.]

Thrale did not escape his friendly animadversion at times. When he and I were one day endeavouring to ascertain, article by article, how one of our friends could possibly spend as much money in his family as he told us he did, she interrupted us by a lively, extravagant sally, on the expense of clothing his children, describing it in a very ludicrous and fanciful manner. Johnson looked a little angry, and said, 'Nay, madam, when you are declaiming, declaim; and when you are calculating, calculate.' At another time, when she said, perhaps affectedly, 'I don't like to fly.' JOHNSON: 'With *your* wings, madam, you *must* fly: but have a care, there are *clippers* abroad.' How very well was this said, and how fully has experience proved the truth of it! But have they not *clipped* rather *rudely*, and gone a great deal *closer* than was necessary?

A gentleman expressed a wish to go and live three years at Otaheite, or New Zealand, in order to obtain a full acquaintance with people so totally different from all that we have ever known, and be satisfied what pure nature can do for man. JOHNSON: 'What could you learn, sir? What can savages tell but what they themselves have seen? Of the past, or the invisible, they can tell nothing. The inhabitants of Otaheite and New Zealand are not in a state of pure nature; for it is plain they broke off from some other people. Had they grown out of the ground, you might have judged of a state of pure nature. Fanciful people may talk of a mythology being amongst them; but it must be invention. They have once had religion, which has been gradually debased. And what account of their religion can you suppose to be learned from savages? Only

consider, sir, our own state: our religion is in a book; we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach it; we have one day in the week set apart for it, and this is, in general, pretty well observed: yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell of their religion.'

On Monday, April 29, he and I made an excursion to Bristol, where I was entertained with seeing him inquire upon the spot, into the authenticity of '*Rowley's* poetry,' as I had seen him inquire upon the spot into the authenticity of '*Ossian's* poetry.' George Catcot, the pewterer, who was as zealous for Rowley, as Hugh Blair was for *Ossian* (I trust my reverend friend will excuse the comparison), attended us at our inn, and with a triumphant air of lively simplicity called out, 'I'll make Dr. Johnson a convert.' Dr. Johnson, at his desire, read aloud some of Chatterton's fabricated verses, while Catcot stood at the back of his chair, moving himself like a pendulum, and beating time with his feet, and now and then looking into Dr. Johnson's face, wondering that he was not yet convinced. We called on Mr. Barret, the surgeon, and saw some of the *originals*, as they were called, which were executed very artificially; but from a careful inspection of them, and a consideration of the circumstances with which they were attended, we were quite satisfied of the imposture, which, indeed, has been clearly demonstrated from internal evidence by several able critics.[1]

Honest Catcot seemed to pay no attention whatever to any objections, but insisted, as an end of all contro-

[1] Mr. Tyrwhitt, Mr. Warton, Mr. Malone.

versy, that we should go with him to the tower of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and *view with our own eyes* the ancient chest in which the manuscripts were found. To this Dr. Johnson good-naturedly agreed; and though troubled with a shortness of breathing, laboured up a long flight of steps, till we came to the place where the wondrous chest stood. 'There (said Catcot, with a bouncing, confident credulity) *there* is the very chest itself.' After this *ocular demonstration* there was no more to be said. He brought to my recollection a Scotch Highlander, a man of learning too, and who had seen the world, attesting, and at the same time giving his reasons for, the authenticity of Fingal: 'I have heard all that poem when I was young.' 'Have you, sir? Pray what have you heard?' 'I have heard Ossian, Oscar, and *every one of them.*'

Johnson said of Chatterton, 'This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things.'

We were by no means pleased with our inn at Bristol. 'Let us see now (said I) how we should describe it.' Johnson was ready with his raillery. 'Describe it, sir? Why, it was so bad that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!'

After Dr. Johnson's return to London I was several times with him at his house, where I occasionally slept in the room that had been assigned for me. I dined with him at Dr. Taylor's, at General Oglethorpe's, and at General Paoli's. To avoid a tedious minuteness I shall group together what I have preserved of his conversation during this period also, without specifying each scene where it passed, except one,

which will be found so remarkable as certainly to deserve a very particular relation. Where the place or the persons do not contribute to the zest of the conversation it is unnecessary to encumber my page with mentioning them. To know of what vintage our wine is enables us to judge of its value, and to drink it with more relish; but to have the produce of each vine of one vineyard, in the same year, kept separate, would serve no purpose. To know that our wine (to use an advertising phrase) is 'of the stock of an ambassador lately deceased,' heightens its flavour: but it signifies nothing to know the bin where each bottle was once deposited.

'Garrick (he observed) does not play the part of Archer in the *Beaux Stratagem*[1] well. The gentleman should break out through the footman, which is not the case as he does it.'

'Where there is no education, as in savage countries, men will have the upper hand of women. Bodily strength, no doubt, contributes to this; but it would be so, exclusive of that; for it is mind that always governs. When it comes to dry understanding man has the better.'

'The little volumes entitled *Respublicæ*, which are very well done, were a bookseller's work.'

'There is much talk of the misery which we cause to the brute creation; but they are recompensed by existence. If they were not useful to man, and therefore protected by him, they would not be nearly so numerous.' This argument is to be found in the able and benignant Hutcheson's *Moral Philosophy*. But the question is, whether the animals who endure such

[1] [By Farquhar.—A. B.]

sufferings of various kinds, for the service and entertainment of man, would accept of existence upon the terms on which they have it. Madame Sévigné, who, though she had many enjoyments, felt with delicate sensibility the prevalence of misery, complains of the task of existence having been imposed upon her without her consent.

'That man is never happy for the present is so true that all his relief from unhappiness is only forgetting himself for a little while. Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment.'

'Though many men are nominally intrusted with the administration of hospitals and other public institutions, almost all the good is done by one man, by whom the rest are driven on, owing to confidence in him, and indolence in them.'

'Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant manner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say, "I'll be genteel." There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree of restraint is insufferable; but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman sitting in company to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in.' No man was a more attentive and nice observer of behaviour in those in whose company he happened to be than Johnson; or, however strange it may seem to many, had a higher estimation of its refinements. Lord Eliot informs me that one day when Johnson and he were at dinner in

a gentleman's house in London, upon Lord Chesterfield's Letters being mentioned, Johnson surprised the company by this sentence: 'Every man of any education would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in *the graces*.' Mr. Gibbon, who was present, turned to a lady who knew Johnson well, and lived much with him, and in his quaint manner, tapping his box, addressed her thus: 'Don't you think, madam (looking towards Johnson), that among *all* your acquaintance you could find *one* exception?' The lady smiled, and seemed to acquiesce.

'I read (said he) Sharpe's Letters on Italy over again when I was at Bath. There is a great deal of matter in them.'

'Mrs. Williams was angry that Thrale's family did not send regularly to her every time they heard from me while I was in the Hebrides. Little people are apt to be jealous: but they should not be jealous; for they ought to consider that superior attention will necessarily be paid to superior fortune or rank. Two persons may have equal merit, and on that account may have an equal claim to attention; but one of them may have also fortune and rank, and so may have a double claim.'

Talking of his notes on Shakespeare, he said, 'I despise those who do not see that I am right in the passage where *as* is repeated, and 'asses of great charge' introduced. That on 'To be, or not to be,' is disputable.'[1]

[1] It may be observed, that Mr. Malone, in his very valuable edition of Shakespeare, has fully vindicated Dr. Johnson from the idle censures which the first of these notes has given rise to. The interpretation of the other passage, which Dr. Johnson allows to be *disputable*, he has clearly shown to be erroneous.

A gentleman, whom I found sitting with him one morning, said, that in his opinion the character of an infidel was more detestable than that of a man notoriously guilty of an atrocious crime. I differed from him, because we are surer of the odiousness of the one than of the error of the other. JOHNSON: 'Sir, I agree with him, for the infidel would be guilty of any crime if he were inclined to it.'

'Many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world. One of these is the cry against the evil of luxury. Now the truth is that luxury produces much good. Take the luxury of buildings in London. Does it not produce real advantage in the conveniency and elegance of accommodation, and this all from the exertion of industry? People will tell you, with a melancholy face, how many builders are in jail. It is plain they are in jail, not for building; for rents are not fallen. A man gives half a guinea for a dish of green peas. How much gardening does this occasion? how many labourers must the competition to have such things early in the market keep in employment? You will hear it said very gravely, "Why was not the half-guinea, thus spent in luxury, given to the poor? To how many might it have afforded a good meal?" Alas! has it not gone to the *industrious* poor, whom it is better to support than the *idle* poor? You are much surer that you are doing good when you *pay* money to those who work, as the recompense of their labour, than when you *give* money merely in charity. Suppose the ancient luxury of a dish of peacock's brains were to be revived, how many carcasses would be left to the poor at a cheap rate: and as to the rout that is

made about people who are ruined by extravagance, it is no matter to the nation that some individuals suffer. When so much general productive exertion is the consequence of luxury, the nation does not care though there are debtors in jail: nay, they would not care though their creditors were there too.'

The uncommon vivacity of General Oglethorpe's mind, and variety of knowledge, having sometimes made his conversation seem too desultory, Johnson observed, 'Oglethorpe, sir, never *completes* what he has to say.'

He on the same account made a similar remark on Patrick, Lord Elibank: 'Sir, there is nothing *conclusive* in his talk.'

When I complained of having dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered, he said, 'Sir, there seldom is any such conversation.' Boswell: 'Why then meet at table?' Johnson: 'Why, to eat and drink together, and to promote kindness; and, sir, this is better done where there is no solid conversation; for when there is, people differ in opinion, and get into bad humour, or some of the company who are not capable of such conversation are left out, and feel themselves uneasy. It was for this reason Sir Robert Walpole said, he always talked bawdy at his table, because in that all could join.'

Being irritated by hearing a gentleman ask Mr. Levett a variety of questions concerning him when he was sitting by, he broke out, 'Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both.'[1] 'A

[1] [The late Lord Coleridge managed, when in the United States, to make this quotation, and to apply it to America and himself, without giving offence to national susceptibilities.—A. B.]

man (said he) should not talk of himself, nor much of any particular person. He should take care not to be made a proverb; and, therefore, should avoid having any one topic of which people can say, "We shall hear him upon it." There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the Duke of Marlborough. He came into a coffee-house one day, and told that his Grace had spoken in the House of Lords for half an hour. "Did he indeed speak for half an hour?" (said Belchier, the surgeon).—"Yes."—"And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?"—"Nothing."—"Why, then, sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour without saying something of him."'

'Every man is to take existence on the terms on which it is given to him. To some men it is given on condition of not taking liberties, which other men may take without much harm. One may drink wine, and be nothing the worse for it; on another, wine may have effects so inflammatory as to injure him both in body and mind, and perhaps make him commit something for which he may deserve to be hanged.'

'Lord Hailes' *Annals of Scotland* have not that painted form which is the taste of this age; but it is a book which will always sell, it has such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, and such a punctuality of citation. I never before read Scotch history with certainty.'

I asked him whether he would advise me to read the Bible with a commentary, and what commentaries he would recommend. JOHNSON: 'To be sure, sir, I would have you read the Bible with a commentary;

and I would recommend Lowth and Patrick on the Old Testament, and Hammond on the New.'

During my stay in London this spring, I solicited his attention to another law-case, in which I was engaged. In the course of a contested election for the burgh of Dunfermline, which I attended as one of my friend Colonel (afterwards Sir Archibald) Campbell's counsel, one of his political agents—who was charged with having been unfaithful to his employer, and having deserted to the opposite party for a pecuniary reward—attacked very rudely in a newspaper the Reverend Mr. James Thomson, one of the ministers of that place, on account of a supposed allusion to him in one of his sermons. Upon this the minister, on a subsequent Sunday, arraigned him by name from the pulpit with some severity; and the agent, after the sermon was over, rose up and asked the minister aloud, 'What bribe he had received for telling so many lies from the chair of verity.' I was present at this very extraordinary scene. The person arraigned, and his father and brother, who also had a share both of the reproof from the pulpit, and in the retaliation, brought an action against Mr. Thomson, in the Court of Session, for defamation and damages, and I was one of the counsel for the reverend defendant. The *liberty of the pulpit* was our great ground of defence; but we argued also on the provocation of the previous attack, and on the instant retaliation. The Court of Session, however—the fifteen judges, who are at the same time the jury—decided against the minister, contrary to my humble opinion; and several of them expressed themselves with indignation against him. He was an aged gentleman, formerly a military

chaplain, and a man of high spirit and honour. Johnson was satisfied that the judgment was wrong, and dictated to me the following argument in confutation of it:

'Of the censure pronounced from the pulpit our determination must be formed as in other cases by a consideration of the act itself, and the particular circumstances with which it is invested.

'The right of censure and rebuke seems necessarily appendant to the pastoral office. He to whom the care of a congregation is intrusted is considered as the shepherd of a flock, as the teacher of a school, as the father of a family. As a shepherd tending not his own sheep but those of his master, he is answerable for those that stray and those that lose themselves by straying. But no man can be answerable for losses which he has not power to prevent, or for vagrancy which he has not authority to restrain.

'As a teacher giving instruction for wages, and liable to reproach if those whom he undertakes to inform make no proficiency, he must have the power of enforcing attendance, of awakening negligence, and repressing contradiction.

'As a father, he possesses the paternal authority of admonition, rebuke, and punishment. He cannot, without reducing his office to an empty name, be hindered from the exercise of any practice necessary to stimulate the idle, to reform the vicious, to check the petulant, and correct the stubborn.

'If we inquire into the practice of the primitive church, we shall, I believe, find the ministers of the word exercising the whole authority of this complicated character. We shall find them not only encouraging the good by exhortation, but terrifying the wicked by reproof and denunciation. In the earliest ages of the Church, while religion was yet pure from secular advantages, the punishment of sinners was public censure and open penance; penalties inflicted merely by ecclesiastical authority at a time while the church had yet no help from the civil power; while the hand of the magistrate lifted only the rod of persecution, and when governors were ready to afford a refuge to all those who fled from clerical authority.

'That the Church, therefore, had once a power of public censure is evident, because that power was frequently exercised. That it borrowed not its power from the civil authority is likewise certain, because civil authority was at that time its enemy.

'The hour came at length when, after three hundred years of struggle and distress, Truth took possession of imperial power, and the civil laws lent their aid to the ecclesiastical constitutions. The magistrate from that time co-operated with the priest, and clerical sentences were made efficacious by secular force. But the State, when it came to the assistance of the Church, had no intention to diminish its authority. Those rebukes and those censures which were lawful before were lawful still. But they had hitherto operated only upon voluntary submission. The refractory and contemptuous were at first in no danger of temporal severities, except what they might suffer from the reproaches of conscience or the detestation of their fellow-Christians. When religion obtained the support of law, if admonitions and censures had no effect, they were seconded by the magistrates with coercion and punishment.

'It therefore appears from ecclesiastical history that the right of inflicting shame by public censure has been always considered as inherent in the Church, and that this right was not conferred by the civil power, for it was exercised when the civil power operated against it. By the civil power it was never taken away, for the Christian magistrate interposed his office, not to rescue sinners from censure, but to supply more powerful means of reformation, to add pain where shame was insufficient, and when men were proclaimed unworthy of the society of the faithful, to restrain them by imprisonment from spreading abroad the contagion of wickedness.

'It is not improbable that from this acknowledged power of public censure grew in time the practice of auricular confession. Those who dreaded the blast of public reprehension were willing to submit themselves to the priest by a private accusation of themselves, and to obtain a reconciliation with the Church by a kind of clandestine absolution and invisible penance; conditions with which the priest would in times of ignorance and corruption easily comply as they increased his

influence, by adding the knowledge of secret sins to that of notorious offences, and enlarged his authority by making him the sole arbiter of the terms of reconcilement.

'From this bondage the Reformation set us free. The minister has no longer power to press into the retirements of conscience, to torture us by interrogatories, or put himself in possession of our secrets and our lives. But though we have thus controlled his usurpations, his just and original power remains unimpaired. He may still see, though he may not pry: he may yet hear, though he may not question. And that knowledge which his eyes and ears force upon him it is still his duty to use for the benefit of his flock. A father who lives near a wicked neighbour may forbid a son to frequent his company. A minister who has in his congregation a man of open and scandalous wickedness, may warn his parishioners to shun his conversation. To warn them is not only lawful, but not to warn them would be criminal. He may warn them one by one in friendly converse, or by a parochial visitation. But if he may warn each man singly, what shall forbid him to warn them all together? Of that which is to be made known to all, how is there any difference whether it be communicated to each singly or to all together? What is known to all must necessarily be public. Whether it shall be public at once or public by degrees, is the only question. And of a sudden and solemn publication the impression is deeper, and the warning more effectual.

'It may easily be urged, if a minister be thus left at liberty to delate sinners from the pulpit, and to publish at will the crimes of a parishioner, he may often blast the innocent and distress the timorous. He may be suspicious, and condemn without evidence; he may be rash, and judge without examination; he may be severe, and treat slight offences with too much harshness; he may be malignant and partial, and gratify his private interest or resentment under the shelter of his pastoral character.

'Of all this there is possibility and of all this there is danger. But if possibility of evil be to exclude good, no good ever can be done. If nothing is to be attempted in which there is danger, we must all sink into hopeless inactivity. The evils that may be feared from this practice arise not from any

defect in the institution, but from the infirmities of human nature. Power, in whatever hands it is placed, will be sometimes improperly exerted, yet courts of law must judge, though they will sometimes judge amiss. A father must instruct his children, though he himself may often want instruction. A minister must censure sinners, though his censure may be sometimes erroneous by want of judgment, and sometimes unjust by want of honesty.

'If we examine the circumstances of the present case, we shall find the sentence neither erroneous nor unjust; we shall find no breach of private confidence, no intrusion into secret transactions. The fact was notorious and indubitable, so easy to be proved that no proof was desired. The act was base and treacherous, the perpetration insolent and open, and the example naturally mischievous. The minister, however, being retired and recluse, had not yet heard what was publicly known throughout the parish; and on occasion of a public election warned his people, according to his duty, against the crimes which public elections frequently produce. His warning was felt by one of his parishioners as pointed particularly at himself. But instead of producing, as might be wished, private compunction and immediate reformation, it kindled only rage and resentment. He charged his minister in a public paper with scandal, defamation, and falsehood. The minister thus reproached had his own character to vindicate, upon which his pastoral authority must necessarily depend. To be charged with a defamatory lie is an injury which no man patiently endures in common life. To be charged with polluting the pastoral office with scandal and falsehood was a violation of character still more atrocious, as it affected not only his personal but his clerical veracity. His indignation naturally rose in proportion to his honesty, and with all the fortitude of injured honesty he dared his calumniator in the church, and at once exonerated himself from censure, and rescued his flock from deception and from danger. The man whom he accuses pretends not to be innocent, or at least only pretends, for he declines a trial. The crime of which he is accused has frequent opportunities and strong temptations. It has already spread far, with much depravation of private morals, and much injury to public happiness. To warn the

people therefore against it was not wanton and officious, but necessary and pastoral.

'What then is the fault with which this worthy minister is charged? He has usurped no dominion over conscience. He has exerted no authority in support of doubtful and controverted opinions. He has not dragged into light a bashful and corrigible sinner. His censure was directed against a breach of morality, against an act which no man justifies. The man who appropriated this censure to himself is evidently and notoriously guilty. His consciousness of his own wickedness incited him to attack his faithful reprover with open insolence and printed accusations. Such an attack made defence necessary, and we hope it will be at last decided that the means of defence were just and lawful.'

When I read this to Mr. Burke, he was highly pleased, and exclaimed, 'Well; he does his work in a workman-like manner.'[1]

Mr. Thomson wished to bring the cause by appeal before the House of Lords, but was dissuaded by the advice of the noble person who lately presided so ably in that Most Honourable House, and who was then Attorney-General. As my readers will, no doubt, be glad also to read the opinion of this eminent man upon the same subject, I shall here insert it:

CASE.

'There is herewith laid before you:—

'1. Petition for the Reverend Mr. James Thomson, minister of Dunfermline.

'2. Answers thereto.

[1] As a proof of Dr. Johnson's extraordinary powers of composition, it appears from the original manuscript of this excellent dissertation, of which he dictated the first eight paragraphs on the 10th of May, and the remainder on the 13th, that there are in the whole only seven corrections, or rather variations, and those not considerable. Such were at once the vigorous and accurate emanations of his mind.

'3. Copy of the judgment of the Court of Session upon both.

'4. Notes of the opinions of the Judges, being the reasons upon which their decree is grounded.

'These papers you will please to peruse, and give your opinion,

'Whether there is a probability of the above decree of the Court of Session's being reversed, if Mr. Thomson should appeal from the same?'

'I don't think the appeal advisable: not only because the value of the judgment is in no degree adequate to the expense, but because there are many chances that, upon the general complexion of the case, the impression will be taken to the disadvantage of the appellant.

'It is impossible to approve the style of that sermon. But the *complaint* was not less ungracious from that man who had behaved so ill by his original libel, and at the time when he received the reproach he complains of. In the last article all the plaintiffs are equally concerned. It struck me also with some wonder that the Judges should think so much fervour apposite to the occasion of reproving the defendant for a little excess.

'Upon the matter, however, I agree with them in condemning the behaviour of the minister, and in thinking it a subject fit for ecclesiastical censure, and even for an action, if any individual could qualify[1] a wrong, and a damage arising from it. But this I doubt. The circumstance of publishing the reproach in a pulpit, though extremely indecent, and culpable in another view, does not constitute a different sort of wrong or any other rule of law than would have obtained if the same words had been pronounced elsewhere. I don't know whether there be any difference in the law of Scotland in the definition of slander, before the Commissaries or the Court of Session. The common law of England does not give way to actions for every reproachful word. An action cannot be brought for

[1] It is curious to observe that Lord Thurlow has here, perhaps in compliment to North Britain, made use of a term of the Scotch Law, which to an English reader may require explanation. To *qualify* a wrong is to point out and establish it.

general damages upon any words which import less than an offence cognisable by law: consequently no action could have been brought here for the words in question. Both laws admit the truth to be a justification in actions *for words*; and the law of England does the same in actions for libels. The judgment, therefore, seems to me to have been wrong, in that the Court repelled that defence.

'E. THURLOW.'

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr. Johnson's life, which fell under my own observation; of which *pars magna fui*, and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal-minded, be much to his credit.

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description, had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr. Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They have even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I could fully relish the excellence of each; for I have ever delighted in that intellectual chemistry which can separate good qualities from evil in the same person.

Sir John Pringle, 'mine own friend and my father's friend,' between whom and Dr. Johnson I in vain wished to establish an acquaintance, as I respected and lived in intimacy with both of them, observed to me once, very ingeniously, 'It is not in friendship as in mathematics, where two things, each equal to a third, are equal between themselves. You agree with Johnson as a middle quality, and you agree with me as a middle quality; but Johnson and I should not agree.' Sir John was not sufficiently flexible; so I desisted; knowing, indeed, that the repulsion was

equally strong on the part of Johnson; who, I know not from what cause, unless being a Scotchman, had formed a very erroneous opinion of Sir John. But I conceived an irresistible wish, if possible, to bring Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes together. How to manage it was a nice and difficult matter.

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly, in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen, on Wednesday, May 15. 'Pray (said I), let us have Dr. Johnson.' 'What, with Mr. Wilkes? not for the world (said Mr. Edward Dilly): Dr. Johnson would never forgive me.' 'Come (said I), if you 'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.' DILLY: 'Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.'

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.'[1] I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus:—'Mr. Dilly, sir, sends his respectful compli-

[1] This has been circulated as if actually said by Johnson; when the truth is, it was only *supposed* by me.

ments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I will wait upon him—' BOSWELL: 'Provided, sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you.' JOHNSON: 'What do you mean, sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?' BOSWELL: 'I beg your pardon, sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotic friends with him.' JOHNSON: 'Well, sir, and what then? What care *I* for his *patriotic friends*? Poh!' BOSWELL: 'I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.' JOHNSON: 'And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.' BOSWELL: 'Pray forgive me, sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.' Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much-expected Wednesday I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, sir? (said I). Don't you

recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams.' BOSWELL: 'But, my dear sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.' JOHNSON: 'You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this.'

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to show Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down-stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. 'Yes, sir (said she, pretty peevishly), Dr. Johnson is to dine at home.' 'Madam (said I), his respect for you is such that I know he will not leave you, unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, madam, be pleased to consider my situation: I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come: and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.' She gradually softened to my

solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, 'That, all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.' I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay'; but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. William's consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon dressed. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him, to set out for Gretna Green.

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, sir?' 'Mr. Arthur Lee.' JOHNSON: 'Too, too, too' (under his breath), which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot* but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. 'And who is the gentleman in lace?' 'Mr. Wilkes, sir.' This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I daresay, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he therefore

resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table,' dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill-humour. There were present, beside Mr. Wilkes, and Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physic at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettsom, and Mr. Slater the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness that he gained upon him insensibly. No man ate more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. 'Pray give me leave, sir—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.' 'Sir, sir, I am obliged to you, sir,' cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surly virtue,'[1] but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said, 'He is not a good mimic.' One of the company added, 'A merry-andrew, a buffoon.' JOHNSON: 'But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he

[1] Johnson's 'London, a Poem,' v. 145.

has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, sir, when you think you have got him—like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is free.' WILKES: 'Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's.' JOHNSON: 'The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, sir, he was irresistible.[1] He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of

[1] Foote told me that Johnson said of him, 'For loud obstreperous broad-faced mirth I know not his equal.'

the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went downstairs, he told them, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer."'

Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this. WILKES: 'Garrick would have made the small-beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub* all his life.' I knew that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick but himself, as Garrick said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said loudly, 'I have heard Garrick is liberal.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendour than is suitable to a player: if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice,

which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy.'

Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information for biography, Johnson told us, 'When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the "Life of Dryden," and in order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, "That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair." Cibber could tell no more but "that he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's." You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other.' BOSWELL: 'But Cibber was a man of observation?' JOHNSON: 'I think not.' BOSWELL: 'You will allow his *Apology* to be well done.' JOHNSON: 'Very well done, to be sure, sir. That book is a striking proof of the justice of Pope's remark:

> "Each might his several province well command,
> Would all but stoop to what they understand."'

BOSWELL: 'And his plays are good.' JOHNSON: 'Yes; but that was his trade; *l'esprit du corps*; he had been all his life among players and playwriters. I wondered that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company, and learnt all that can be got by the ear. He abused Pindar to me, and then showed me an ode of his own, with an absurd couplet,

making a linnet soar on an eagle's wing. I told him that when the ancients made a simile they always made it like something real.'

Mr. Wilkes remarked, that 'among all the bold flights of Shakespeare's imagination, the boldest was making Birnam wood march to Dunsinnane; creating a wood where there never was a shrub; a wood in Scotland!—ha! ha! ha!' And he also observed, that 'the clannish slavery of the Highlands of Scotland was the single exception to Milton's remark of "The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty," being worshipped in all hilly countries.' 'When I was at Inveraray (said he), on a visit to my old friend Archibald, Duke of Argyll, his dependants congratulated me on being such a favourite of his Grace. I said, "It is then, gentlemen, truly lucky for me; for if I had displeased the Duke, and he had wished it, there is not a Campbell among you but would have been ready to bring John Wilkes's head to him in a charger. It would have been only

"Off with his head! So much for *Aylesbury*."

I was then member for Aylesbury.'

Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes talked of the contested passage in Horace's *Art of Poetry*, '*Difficile est proprie communia dicere.*' Mr. Wilkes, according to my note, gave the interpretation thus: 'It is difficult to speak with propriety of common things; as, if a poet had to speak of Queen Caroline drinking tea, he must endeavour to avoid the vulgarity of cups and saucers.' But upon reading my note, he tells me that he meant to say, that 'the word *communia* being a Roman law-term, signifies here things *communis*

juris, that is to say, what have never yet been treated by anybody; and this appears clearly from what followed,

> "tuque
> Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
> Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus."

You will easier make a tragedy out of the *Iliad* than on any subject not handled before.'[1] JOHNSON: 'He means that it is difficult to appropriate to particular persons qualities which are common to all mankind, as Homer has done.'

WILKES: 'We have no city poet now; that is an office which has gone into disuse. The last was

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[1] My very pleasant friend himself, as well as others *who remember old stories*, will no doubt be surprised, when I observe that *John Wilkes* here shows himself to be of the Warburtonian school. It is nevertheless true, as appears from Dr. Hurd the Bishop of Worcester's very elegant commentary and notes on the *Epistola ad Pisones*.

It is necessary to a fair consideration of the question, that the whole passage in which the words occur should be kept in view:

> 'Si quid inexpertum scenæ committis, et audes
> Personam formare novam; servetur ad imum
> Qualis ab incœpto processerit, et sibi constet.
> Difficile est proprie communia dicere: tuque
> Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
> Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.
> Publica materies privati juris erit, si
> Non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem;
> Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus
> Interpres; nec desilies imitator in arctum,
> Unde pedem proferre pudor vetat, aut operis lex.'—v. 125.

The 'Commentary' thus illustrates it: 'But the formation of quite *new characters* is a work of great difficulty and hazard. For here there is no generally received and fixed *archetype* to work after, but every one *judges* of common right, according to the extent and comprehension of his own idea; therefore, he advises to labour and refit *old characters and subjects*, particularly those made known and authorised by the practice of Homer and the Epic writers.'

The 'Note' is, 'Difficile est proprie communia dicere.' Lambin's comment is, 'Communia hoc loco appellat Horatius argumenta fabularum a nullo adhuc tractata: et ita, quæ cuivis exposita sunt et in medio quodammodo posita, quasi vacua et a nemine occupata.' And that this is the true meaning of *communia*, is evidently fixed by the words *ignota*

Elkanah Settle. There is something in *names* which one cannot help feeling. Now *Elkanah Settle* sounds so *queer*, who can expect much from that name? We should have no hesitation to give it for John Dryden, in preference to Elkanah Settle, from the names only, without knowing their different merits.' JOHNSON: 'I suppose, sir, Settle did as well for aldermen in his time, as John Home could do now. Where did Beckford and Trecothick learn English?'

Mr. Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch*

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indictaque, which are explanatory of it; so that the sense given it in the commentary is unquestionably the right one. Yet, notwithstanding the clearness of the case, a late critic has this strange passage: 'Difficile quidem esse proprie communia dicere, hoc est, materiam vulgarem, notam et e medio petitam, ita immutare atque exornare, ut nova et scriptori propria videatur, ultro concedimus; et maximi procul dubio ponderis ista est observatio. Sed omnibus utrinque collatis, et tum difficilis tum venusti, tam judicii quam ingenii ratione habita, major videtur esse gloria fabulam formare penitus novam, quam veterem, utcunque mutatam, de novo exhibere.' (*Poet. Præl.* v. ii. p. 164.) Where having first put a wrong construction on the word *communia*, he employs it to introduce an impertinent criticism. For where does the poet prefer the glory of refitting *old* subjects to that of inventing new ones? The contrary is implied in what he urges about the superior difficulty of the latter, from which he dissuades his countrymen, only in respect of their abilities and inexperience in these matters; and in order to cultivate in them, which is the main view of the epistle, a spirit of correctness, by sending them to the old subjects treated by the Greek writers.'

For my own part (with all deference for Dr. Hurd, who thinks the *case clear*), I consider the passage, 'Difficile est proprie communia dicere,' to be a *crux* for the critics on Horace.

The explication which my Lord of Worcester treats with so much contempt, is nevertheless countenanced by authority, which I find quoted by the learned Baxter, in his edition of Horace, '*Difficile est proprie communia dicere*, h. e. res vulgares disertis verbis enarrare, vel humile thema cum dignitate tractare. *Difficile est communes res propriis explicare verbis.* Vet. Schol.' I was much disappointed to find that the great critic, Dr. Bentley, has no note upon this very difficult passage, as from his vigorous and illuminate mind, I should have expected to receive more satisfaction than I have yet had.

Sanadon thus treats of it: '*Proprie communia dicere*; c'est à dire, qu'il n'est pas aisé de former à ces personnages d'imagination, des

would not know it to be barren.' BOSWELL: 'Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there.' JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home.' All these quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile, which showed that he meant only wit. Upon this topic, he and Mr. Wilkes could perfectly assimilate; here was a bond of union between them, and I was conscious that as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange, narrow ignorance of those who imagine that

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caractères particuliers et cependant vraisemblables. Comme l'on a été le maître de les former tels qu'on a voulu, les fautes que l'on fait en cela sont moins pardonnables. C'est pourquoi Horace conseille de prendre toujours des sujets connus, tels que sont, par exemple, ceux que l'on peut tirer des poêmes d'Homère.'

And Dacier observes upon it, 'Après avoir marqué les deux qualités qu'il faut donner aux personnages qu'on invente, il conseille aux Poëtes tragiques, de n'user pas trop facilement de cette liberté qu'ils ont d en inventer, car il est très difficile de reussir dans ces nouveaux caractères. Il est mal aisé, dit Horace, *de traiter proprement*, c'est à dire *convenablement*, des *sujets communs*; c'est à dire, des sujets inventés, et qui n'ont aucun fondement ni dans l'Histoire ni dans la Fable; et il les appelle *communs*, parce qu'ils sont en disposition à tout le monde, et que tout le monde a le droit de les inventer, et qu'ils sont, comme on dit, au premier occupant.' See his observations at large on this expression and the following.

After all, I cannot help entertaining some doubt whether the words, 'Difficile est proprie communia dicere,' may not have been thrown in by Horace to form a *separate* article in a 'choice of difficulties' which a poet has to encounter, who chooses a new subject: in which case, it must be uncertain which of the various explanations is the true one, and every reader has a right to decide as it may strike his own fancy. And even should the words be understood as they generally are, to be connected both with what goes before and what comes after, the exact sense cannot be absolutely ascertained; for instance, whether *proprie* is meant to signify *in an appropriated manner*, as Dr. Johnson here understands it, or, as it is often used by Cicero, *with propriety*, or *elegantly*. In short, it is a rare instance of a defect in perspicuity in an admirable writer, who with almost every species of excellence, is peculiarly remarkable for that quality. The length of this note perhaps requires an apology. Many of my readers, I doubt not, will admit that a critical discussion of a passage in a favourite classic is very engaging.

it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes. When I claimed a superiority for Scotland over England in one respect, that no man can be arrested there for a debt, merely because another swears it against him; but there must first be the judgment of a court of law ascertaining its justice; and that a seizure of the person, before judgment is obtained, can take place only if his creditor should swear that he is about to fly from the country, or, as it is technically expressed, is *in meditatione fugæ*. WILKES: 'That, I should think, may be safely sworn of all the Scotch nation.' JOHNSON (to Mr. Wilkes): 'You must know, sir, I lately took my friend Boswell, and showed him genuine civilised life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility: for you know he lives among savages in Scotland, and among rakes in London.' WILKES: 'Except when he is with grave, sober, decent people, like you and me.' JOHNSON (smiling): 'And we ashamed of him.'

They were quite frank and easy. Johnson told the story of his asking Mrs. Macaulay to allow her footman to sit down with them, to prove the ridiculousness of the argument for the equality of mankind; and he said to me afterwards, with a nod of satisfaction, 'You saw Mr. Wilkes acquiesced.' Wilkes talked with all imaginable freedom of the ludicrous title given to the Attorney-General, *Diabolus Regis*; adding, 'I have reason to know something about that officer; for I was prosecuted for a libel.' Johnson, who many people would have supposed must have been furiously angry at hearing this talked of so

lightly, said not a word. He was now, *indeed*, 'a good-humoured fellow.'

After dinner, we had an accession of Mrs. Knowles, the Quaker lady, well known for her various talents, and of Mr. Alderman Lee. Amidst some patriotic groans, somebody (I think the alderman) said, 'Poor old England is lost.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that Old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it.'[1] WILKES: 'Had Lord Bute governed Scotland only, I should not have taken the trouble to write his eulogy, and dedicate *Mortimer* to him.'

Mr. Wilkes held a candle to show a fine print of a beautiful female figure which hung in the room, and pointed out the elegant contour of the bosom, with the finger of an arch connoisseur. He afterwards, in a conversation with me, waggishly insisted, that all the time Johnson showed visible signs of a fervent admiration of the corresponding charms of the fair Quaker.

This record, though by no means so perfect as I could wish, will serve to give a notion of a very curious interview, which was not only pleasing at the time, but had the agreeable and benignant effect of reconciling any animosity, and sweetening any acidity, which in the various bustle of political contest, had been produced in the minds of two men, who, though widely different, had so many things in common—classical learning, modern literature, wit and humour, and ready repartee—that it would have been much to be regretted if they had been for ever at a distance from each other.

[1] It would not become me to expatiate on this strong and pointed remark, in which a very great deal of meaning is condensed.

Mr. Burke gave me much credit for this successful *negotiation*; and pleasantly said, 'that there was nothing equal to it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*.'

I attended Dr. Johnson home, and had the satisfaction to hear him tell Mrs. Williams how much he had been pleased with Mr. Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed.

I talked a good deal to him of the celebrated Margaret Caroline Rudd,[1] whom I had visited, induced by the fame of her talents, address, and irresistible power of fascination. To a lady who disapproved of my visiting her, he said on a former occasion, 'Nay, madam, Boswell is in the right; I should have visited her myself, were it not that they have now a trick of putting everything into the newspapers.' This evening he exclaimed, 'I envy him his acquaintance with Mrs. Rudd.'

I mentioned a scheme which I had of making a tour to the Isle of Man, and giving a full account of it; and that Mr. Burke had playfully suggested as a motto,

'The proper study of mankind is MAN.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, you will get more by the book than the jaunt will cost you; so you will have your diversion for nothing, and add to your reputation.'

On the evening of the next day, I took leave of him, being to set out for Scotland. I thanked him with

[1] [Mrs. Rudd lived with one of the brothers Perreau, who about this time were hung for forgery. She betrayed her accomplices, and then they in their turn tried to make out that they were only her dupes, and for this purpose they asserted that she was a most fascinating and irresistible creature. There is no good reason for believing that she was anything of the kind.—A. B.]

great warmth for all his kindness. 'Sir (said he), you are very welcome. Nobody repays it with more.'

How very false is the notion that has gone round the world, of the rough, and passionate, and harsh manners of this great and good man. That he had occasional sallies of heat of temper, and that he was sometimes, perhaps, too 'easily provoked' by absurdity and folly, and sometimes too desirous of triumph in colloquial contest, must be allowed. The quickness both of his perception and sensibility disposed him to sudden explosions of satire; to which his extraordinary readiness of wit was a strong and almost irresistible incitement. To adopt one of the finest images in Home's *Douglas*:

> 'On each glance of thought
> Decision followed, as the thunderbolt
> Pursues the flash!'

I admit that the beadle within him was often so eager to apply the lash, that the judge had not time to consider the case with sufficient deliberation.

That he was occasionally remarkable for violence of temper may be granted; but let us ascertain the degree, and not let it be supposed that he was in a perpetual rage, and never without a club in his hand to knock down every one who approached him. On the contrary, the truth is, that by much the greatest part of his time he was civil, obliging, nay, polite in the true sense of the word; so much so, that many gentlemen who were long acquainted with him never received, or even heard a strong expression from him.

The following letters concerning an Epitaph which he wrote for the monument of Dr. Goldsmith, in Westminster Abbey, afford at once a proof of his

unaffected modesty, his carelessness as to his own writings, and of the great respect which he entertained for the taste and judgment of the excellent and eminent person to whom they are addressed:

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'Dear Sir,—I have been kept away from you, I know not well how, and of those vexatious hindrances I know not when there will be an end. I therefore send you the poor dear Doctor's epitaph. Read it first yourself; and if you then think it right, show it to the Club. I am, you know, willing to be corrected. If you think anything much amiss, keep it to yourself till we come together. I have sent two copies, but prefer the card. The dates must be settled by Dr. Percy.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*May* 16, 1776.'

TO THE SAME

'Sir,—Miss Reynolds has a mind to send the Epitaph to Dr. Beattie; I am very willing, but, having no copy, cannot immediately recollect it. She tells me you have lost it. Try to recollect, and put down as much as you retain; you perhaps may have kept what I have dropped. The lines for which I am at a loss are something of *rerum civilium sive naturalium*.[1] It was a sorry trick to lose it; help me if you can.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*June* 22, 1776.'

'The gout grows better but slowly.'

It was, I think, after I had left London in this year, that this Epitaph gave occasion to a remonstrance to the Monarch of Literature, for an account of which I am indebted to Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo.

That my readers may have the subject more fully and clearly before them, I shall first insert the Epitaph.

[1] These words must have been in the other copy. They are not in that which was preferred.

'Olivarii Goldsmith,
Poetæ, Physici, Historici,
Qui nullum fere scribendi genus
Non tetigit,
Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit:
Sive risus essent movendi,
Sive lacrymæ,
Affectuum potens at lenis dominator:
Ingenio sublimis, vividus, versatilis,
Oratione grandis, nitidus, venustus:
Hoc monumento memoriam coluit
Sodalium amor,
Amicorum fides,
Lectorum veneratio.
Natus in Hibernia Forniæ Longfordiensis,
In loco cui nomen Pallas,
Nov. xxix. mdccxxxi;
Eblanæ literis institutus;
Obiit Londini,
April iv. mdcclxxiv.'

Sir William Forbes writes to me thus:

'I enclose the *Round Robin*. This *jeu d'esprit* took its rise one day at dinner at our friend Sir Joshua Reynolds'. All the company present, except myself, were friends and acquaintance of Dr. Goldsmith. The Epitaph, written for him by Dr. Johnson, became the subject of conversation, and various emendations were suggested, which it was agreed should be submitted to the Doctor's consideration.—But the question was, who should have the courage to propose them to him? At last it was hinted that there could be no way so good as that of a *Round Robin*, as the sailors call it, which they make use of when they enter into a conspiracy, so as not to let it be known who puts his name first or last to the paper. This proposition was instantly assented to; and Dr. Barnard, Dean of Derry, now Bishop of Killaloe,[1] drew up an address to Dr.

[1] [This prelate, who was afterwards translated to the See of Limerick, died at Wimbledon in Surrey, June 7, 1806, in his eightieth year. The original *Round Robin* remained in his possession, the paper which Sir William Forbes transmitted to Mr. Boswell being only a copy.—M.]

Johnson on the occasion, replete with wit and humour, but which it was feared the Doctor might think treated the subject with too much levity. Mr. Burke then proposed the address as it stands in the paper in writing, to which I had the honour to officiate as clerk.

'Sir Joshua agreed to carry it to Dr. Johnson, who received it with much good humour,[1] and desired Sir Joshua to tell the gentlemen that he would alter the Epitaph in any manner they pleased, as to the sense of it; but *he would never consent to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English inscription.*

'I consider this *Round Robin* as a species of literary curiosity worth preserving, as it marks, in a certain degree, Dr. Johnson's character.'

My readers are presented with a faithful transcript

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[1] He however, upon seeing Dr. Warton's name to the suggestion that the Epitaph should be in English, observed to Sir Joshua, 'I wonder that Joe Warton, a scholar by profession, should be such a fool.' He said too: 'I should have thought Mund Burke would have had more sense.' Mr. Langton, who was one of the company at Sir Joshua's, like a sturdy scholar, refused resolutely to sign the *Round Robin*. The Epitaph is engraved upon Dr. Goldsmith's monument without any alteration. At another time, when somebody endeavoured to argue in favour of its being in English, Johnson said: 'The language of the country of which a learned man was a native is not the language fit for his epitaph, which should be in ancient and permanent language. Consider, sir; how you should feel were you to find at Rotterdam an epitaph upon Erasmus in *Dutch*!' For my own part, I think it would be best to have epitaphs written both in a learned language and in the language of the country; so that they might have the advantage of being more universally understood, and at the same time be secured of classical stability. I cannot, however, but be of opinion, that it is not sufficiently discriminative. Applying to Goldsmith equally the epithets of 'Poetæ, Historici, Physici,' is surely not right; for as to his claim to the last of those epithets, I have heard Johnson himself say: 'Goldsmith, sir, will give us a very fine book upon the subject; but if he can distinguish a cow from a horse, that, I believe, may be the extent of his knowledge of natural history.' His book is indeed an excellent performance, though in some instances he appears to have trusted too much to Buffon, who, with all his theoretical ingenuity and extraordinary eloquence, I suspect had little actual information in the science on which he wrote so admirably. For instance, he tells us that the *cow* sheds her horns every two years: a most palpable error, which Goldsmith has faithfully transferred into his book. It is wonderful that Buffon, who lived so much in the country at his noble seat, should have fallen into such a blunder. I suppose he has confounded the *cow* with the *deer*.

of a paper which I doubt not of their being desirous to see.

Sir William Forbes's observation is very just. The anecdote now related proves, in the strongest manner, the reverence and awe with which Johnson was regarded, by some of the most eminent men of his time, in various departments, and even by such of them as lived most with him; while it also confirms what I have again and again inculcated, that he was by no means of that ferocious and irascible character which has been ignorantly imagined.

This hasty composition is also to be remarked, as one of the thousand instances which evince the extraordinary promptitude of Mr. Burke; who while he is equal to the greatest things, can adorn the least; can, with equal facility, embrace the vast and complicated speculations of politics, or the ingenious topics of literary investigation.[1]

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL

'Madam,—You must not think me uncivil in omitting to answer the letter with which you favoured me some time ago. I imagined it to have been written without Mr. Boswell's knowledge, and therefore supposed the answer to require, what I could not find, a private conveyance.

'The difference with Lord Auchinleck is now over; and since young Alexander has appeared I hope no more difficulties will arise among you; for I sincerely wish you all happy. Do not teach the young ones to dislike me, as you dislike me yourself; but let me at least have Veronica's kindness, because she is my acquaintance.

'You will now have Mr. Boswell home; it is well that you have him; he has led a wild life. I have taken him to Lich-

[1] Beside this Latin Epitaph, Johnson honoured the memory of his friend Goldsmith with one short one in Greek. See vol. iii. p. 135.

field, and he has followed Mr. Thrale to Bath. Pray take care of him and tame him. The only thing in which I have the honour to agree with you is in loving him; and while we are so much of a mind in a matter of so much importance, our other quarrels will, I hope, produce no great bitterness.—I am, madam, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 16, 1776.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, June* 25, 1776.

'You have formerly complained that my letters were too long. There is no danger of that complaint being made at present; for I find it difficult for me to write to you at all. [Here an account of having been afflicted with a return of melancholy or bad spirits.]

'The boxes of books[1] which you sent to me are arrived; but I have not yet examined the contents.

. . . . . .

'I send you Mr. Maclaurin's paper for the negro who claims his freedom in the Court of Session.'

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. BOSWELL

'DEAR SIR,—These black fits of which you complain perhaps hurt your memory as well as your imagination. When did I complain that your letters were too long?[2] Your last letter, after a very long delay, brought very bad news. [Here a series of reflections upon melancholy, and—what I could not help thinking strangely unreasonable in him who had suffered so much from it himself,—a good deal of severity and reproof, as if it were owing to my own fault, or that it was perhaps affecting it from a desire of distinction.]

'Read Cheyne's *English Malady*; but do not let him teach you a foolish notion that melancholy is a proof of acuteness.

. . . . . .

[1] Upon a settlement of our account of expenses on a Tour to the Hebrides, there was a balance due to me, which Dr. Johnson chose to discharge by sending books.

[2] Baretti told me that Johnson complained of my writing very long letters to him when I was upon the Continent; which was most certainly true; but it seems my friend did not remember it.

'To hear that you have not opened your boxes of books is very offensive. The examination and arrangement of so many volumes might have afforded you an amusement very seasonable at present, and useful for the whole of life. I am, I confess, very angry that you manage yourself so ill.

. . . . .

'I do not now say any more than that I am with great kindness and sincerity, dear sir, your humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 2, 1776.

'It was last year[1] determined by Lord Mansfield, in the Court of King's Bench, that a negro cannot be taken out of the kingdom without his own consent.'

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. BOSWELL

'DEAR SIR,—I make haste to write again, lest my last letter should give you too much pain. If you are really oppressed with overpowering and involuntary melancholy, you are to be pitied rather than reproached.

. . . . .

'Now, my dear Bozzy, let us have done with quarrels and with censure. Let me know whether I have not sent you a pretty library. There are, perhaps, many books among them which you never need read through; but there are none which it is not proper for you to know, and sometimes to consult. Of these books, of which the use is only occasional, it is often sufficient to know the contents, that, when any question arises, you may know where to look for information.

'Since I wrote I have looked over Mr. Maclaurin's plea and think it excellent. How is the suit carried on? If by subscription, I commission you to contribute, in my name, what is proper. Let nothing be wanting in such a case. Dr. Drummond,[2] I see, is superseded. His father would have

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1 Really in 1772 in Somerset's case.

2 The son of Johnson's old friend, Mr. William Drummond (see vol. ii. p. 182). He was a young man of such distinguished merit that he was nominated to one of the medical professorships in the College of Edinburgh, without solicitation, while he was at Naples. Having other views he did not accept of the honour, and soon afterwards died.

grieved; but he lived to obtain the pleasure of his son's election, and died before that pleasure was abated.

'Langton's lady has brought him a girl, and both are well; I dined with him the other day. . . .

'It vexes me to tell you that on the evening of the 29th of May I was seized by the gout, and am not quite well. The pain has not been violent, but the weakness and tenderness were very troublesome, and what is said to be very uncommon, it has not alleviated my other disorders. Make use of youth and health while you have them; make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell.—I am, my dear sir, your most affectionate,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 16, 1776.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, July* 18, 1776.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the second of this month was rather a harsh medicine; but I was delighted with that spontaneous tenderness, which, a few days afterwards, sent forth such balsam as your next brought me. I found myself for some time so ill that all I could do was to preserve a decent appearance, while all within was weakness and distress. Like a reduced garrison that has some spirit left, I hung out flags, and planted all the force I could muster upon the walls. I am now much better, and I sincerely thank you for your kind attention and friendly counsel.

. . . . . .

'Count Manucci[1] came here last week from travelling in Ireland. I have shown him what civilities I could on his account, on yours, and on that of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. He has had a fall from his horse and been much hurt. I regret this unlucky accident, for he seems to be a very amiable man.'

As the evidence of what I have mentioned at the beginning of this year, I select from his private register the following passage:

[1] A Florentine nobleman, mentioned by Johnson in his *Notes of his Tour in France*. I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with him in London, in the spring of this year.

'*July* 25, 1776. O God who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by Thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect, look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours. Grant me, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do Thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'[1]

It appears from a note subjoined, that this was composed when he 'purposed to apply vigorously to study, particularly of the Greek and Italian tongues.'

Such a purpose, so expressed, at the age of sixty-seven, is admirable and encouraging; and it must impress all the thinking part of my readers with a consolatory confidence in habitual devotion, when they see a man of such enlarged intellectual powers as Johnson, thus, in the genuine earnestness of secrecy, imploring the aid of that Supreme Being, 'from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.'

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'Sir,—A young man, whose name is Paterson, offers himself this evening to the Academy. He is the son of a man[2] for whom I have long had a kindness, and who is now abroad in distress. I shall be glad that you will be pleased to show him any little countenance, or pay him any small distinction. How much it is in your power to favour or to forward a young man I do not know; nor do I know how much this candidate deserves favour by his personal merit, or what hopes his proficiency may now give of future eminence. I recommend him as the son of my friend. Your character and station enable

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 151.

[2] [Samuel Paterson, formerly a bookseller, lately an auctioneer, and well known for his skill in forming catalogues of books. He died in London, October 29, 1802.—M.]

you to give a young man great encouragement by very easy means. You have heard of a man who asked no other favour of Sir Robert Walpole than that he would bow to him at his levee.—I am, sir, your most humble servant.

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Aug.* 3, 1776.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, August* 30, 1776.

[After giving him an account of my having examined the chest of books which he had sent to me, and which contained what may be truly called a numerous and miscellaneous *Stall Library*, thrown together at random:—]

'Lord Hailes was against the decree in the case of my client, the minister; not that he justified the minister, but because the parishioner both provoked and retorted. I sent his Lordship your able argument upon the case for his perusal. His observation upon it in a letter to me was, "Dr. Johnson's *Suasorium* is pleasantly[1] and artfully composed. I suspect, however, that he has not convinced himself; for I believe that he is better read in ecclesiastical history than to imagine that a Bishop or Presbyter has a right to begin censure or discipline *è cathedrâ*.'[2]

. . . . . .

'For the honour of Count Manucci as well as to observe that exactness of truth which you have taught me, I must correct what I said in a former letter. He did not fall from his horse, which might have been an imputation on his skill as an officer of cavalry; his horse fell with him.

'I have, since I saw you, read every word of Granger's *Biographical History*. It has entertained me exceedingly, and I do not think him the *Whig* that you supposed. Horace Walpole's being his patron is, indeed, no good sign of his

[1] Why his Lordship uses the epithet *pleasantly*, when speaking of a grave piece of reasoning, I cannot conceive. But different men have different notions of pleasantry. I happened to sit by a gentleman one evening at the Opera House in London, who at the moment when *Medea* appeared to be in great agony at the thought of killing her children, turned to me with a smile, and said, '*funny* enough.'

[2] Dr. Johnson afterwards told me that he was of opinion that a clergyman had this right.

political principles. But he denied to Lord Mountstuart that he was a Whig, and said he had been accused by both parties of partiality. It seems he was like Pope,

"While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory."

I wish you would look more into his book; and as Lord Mountstuart wishes much to find a proper person to continue the work upon Granger's plan, and has desired I would mention it to you, if such a man occurs please to let me know. His Lordship will give him generous encouragement.'

TO MR. ROBERT LEVET

'Dear Sir,—Having spent about six weeks at this place we have at length resolved upon returning. I expect to see you all in Fleet Street on the 30th of this month.

'I did not go into the sea till last Friday, but think to go most of this week, though I know not that it does me any good. My nights are very restless and tiresome, but I am otherwise well.

'I have written word of my coming to Mrs. Williams. Remember me kindly to Francis and Betsey.[1]—I am, sir, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.[2]

'*Brighthelmstone, Oct.* 21, 1776.'

I again wrote to Dr. Johnson on the 21st of October, informing him that my father had, in the most liberal manner, paid a large debt for me, and that I had now the happiness of being upon very good terms with him; to which he returned the following answer:

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—I had great pleasure in hearing that you are at last on good terms with your father. Cultivate his kind-

[1] [His female servant.—M.]

[2] For this and Dr. Johnson's other letters to Mr. Levet, I am indebted to my old acquaintance, Mr. Nathaniel Thomas, whose worth and ingenuity have been long known to a respectable though not a wide circle; and whose collection of medals would do credit to persons of greater opulence.

[Mr. Nathaniel Thomas, who was many years editor of the *St. James's Chronicle*, died March 1, 1795.—M.]

ness by all honest and manly means. Life is but short; no time can be afforded but for the indulgence of real sorrow, or contests upon questions seriously momentous. Let us not throw away any of our days upon useless resentment, or contend who shall hold out longest in stubborn malignity. It is best not to be angry; and best, in the next place, to be quickly reconciled. May you and your father pass the remainder of your time in reciprocal benevolence!

. . . . .

'Do you ever hear from Mr. Langton? I visit him sometimes, but he does not talk. I do not like his scheme of life; but as I am not permitted to understand it, I cannot set anything right that is wrong. His children are sweet babies.

'I hope my irreconcilable enemy, Mrs. Boswell, is well. Desire her not to transmit her malevolence to the young people. Let me have Alexander and Veronica and Euphemia for my friends.

'Mrs. Williams, whom you may reckon as one of your well-wishers, is in a feeble and languishing state, with little hopes of growing better. She went for some part of the autumn into the country, but is little benefited: and Dr. Lawrence confesses that his art is at an end. Death is, however, at a distance: and what more than that can we say of ourselves? I am sorry for her pain, and more sorry for her decay. Mr. Levet is sound, wind and limb.

'I was some weeks this autumn at Brighthelmstone. The place was very dull, and I was not well; the expedition to the Hebrides was the most pleasant journey that I ever made. Such an effort annually would give the world a little diversification.

'Every year, however, we cannot wander, and must therefore endeavour to spend our time at home as well as we can. I believe it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment have its hour. Xenophon observes in his *Treatise of Economy*, that if everything be kept in a certain place, when anything is worn out or consumed, the vacuity which it leaves will show what is wanting; so if every part of time has its duty, the hour will call into remembrance its proper engagement.

'I have not practised all this prudence myself, but I have

suffered much for want of it; and I would have you, by timely recollection and steady resolution, escape from those evils which have lain heavy upon me,—I am, my dearest Boswell, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Nov.* 16, 1776.'

On the 16th of November I informed him that Mr. Strahan had sent me *twelve* copies of the *Journey to the Western Islands*, handsomely bound, instead of the *twenty* copies which were stipulated; but which, I supposed, were to be only in sheets; requested to know how they should be distributed: and mentioned that I had another son born to me, who was named David, and was a sickly infant.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have been for some time ill of a cold, which, perhaps, I made an excuse to myself for not writing, when in reality I knew not what to say.

'The books you must at last distribute as you think best, in my name, or your own, as you are inclined, or as you judge most proper. Everybody cannot be obliged; but I wish that nobody may be offended. Do the best you can.

'I congratulate you on the increase of your family, and hope that little David is by this time well, and his mamma perfectly recovered. I am much pleased to hear of the re-establishment of kindness between you and your father. Cultivate his paternal tenderness as much as you can. To live at variance at all is uncomfortable; and variance with a father is still more uncomfortable. Besides that, in the whole dispute you have the wrong side; at least you gave the first provocations, and some of them very offensive. Let it now be all over. As you have no reason to think that your new mother has shown you any foul play, treat her with respect, and with some degree of confidence; this will secure your father. When once a discordant family has felt the pleasure of peace they will not willingly lose it. If Mrs. Boswell would

but be friends with me, we might now shut the temple of Janus.

'What came of Dr. Memis's cause? Is the question about the negro determined? Has Sir Allan any reasonable hopes? What has become of poor Macquarry? Let me know the event of all these litigations. I wish particularly well to the negro and Sir Allan.

'Mrs. Williams has been much out of order; and though she is something better, is likely, in her physician's opinion, to endure her malady for life, though she may, perhaps, die of some other. Mrs. Thrale is big, and fancies she carries a boy; if it were very reasonable to wish much about it, I should wish her not to be disappointed. The desire of male heirs is not appendant only to feudal tenures. A son is almost necessary to the continuance of Thrale's fortune; for what can misses do with a brewhouse? Lands are fitter for daughters than trades.

'Baretti went away from Thrale's in some whimsical fit of disgust, or ill-nature, without taking any leave. It is well if he finds in any other place as good an habitation, and as many conveniences. He has got five-and-twenty guineas by translating Sir Joshua's *Discourses* into Italian, and Mr. Thrale gave him an hundred in the spring; so that he is yet in no difficulties.

'Colman has bought Foote's patent, and is to allow Foote for life £1600 a year, as Reynolds told me, and to allow him to play so often on such terms that he may gain £400 more. What Colman can get by this bargain,[1] but trouble and hazard, I do not see.—I am, dear sir, your humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Dec.* 21, 1776.'

The Reverend Dr. Hugh Blair, who had long been admired as a preacher at Edinburgh, thought now of diffusing his excellent sermons more extensively, and increasing his reputation, by publishing a collection of

[1] [It turned out, however, a very fortunate bargain, for Foote, though not then fifty-six, died at an inn in Dover in less than a year, Oct. 21, 1777.—M.]

them. He transmitted the manuscript to Mr. Strahan, the printer, who after keeping it for some time, wrote a letter to him, discouraging the publication. Such at first was the unpropitious state of one of the most successful theological books that has ever appeared. Mr. Strahan, however, had sent one of the sermons to Dr. Johnson for his opinion; and after his unfavourable letter to Dr. Blair had been sent off, he received from Johnson on Christmas Eve, a note in which was the following paragraph:

'I have read over Dr. Blair's first sermon with more than approbation; to say it is good, is to say too little.'

I believe Mr. Strahan had very soon after this time a conversation with Dr. Johnson concerning them; and then he very candidly wrote again to Dr. Blair, enclosing Johnson's note, and agreeing to purchase the volume, for which he and Mr. Cadell gave £100. The sale was so rapid and extensive, and the approbation of the public so high, that to their honour be it recorded, the proprietors made Dr. Blair a present first of one sum, and afterwards of another of £50, thus voluntarily doubling the stipulated price; and when he prepared another volume, they gave him at once £300, being in all £500, by an agreement to which I am a subscribing witness; and now for a third octavo volume he has received no less than £600.

In 1777, it appears from his *Prayers and Meditations*, that Johnson suffered much from a state of mind 'unsettled and perplexed,' and from that constitutional gloom, which, together with his extreme humility and anxiety with regard to his religious

state, made him contemplate himself through too dark and unfavourable a medium. It may be said of him, that he 'saw God in clouds.' Certain we may be of his injustice to himself in the following lamentable paragraph, which it is painful to think came from the contrite heart of this great man, to whose labours the world is so much indebted:

'When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind, very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies.'[1]

But we find his devotions in this year eminently fervent; and we are comforted by observing intervals of quiet, composure, and gladness.

On Easter Day, we find the following emphatic prayer:

'Almighty and most merciful Father, who seest all our miseries, and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me, by thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve thee with pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me; years and infirmities oppress me, terror and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all perplexities relieve and free me; and help me by thy Holy Spirit, that I may now so commemorate the death of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, as that when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for His sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen.'[1]

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[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 155. [2] *Ibid.* p. 158.

While he was at church, the agreeable impressions upon his mind are thus commemorated:

'I was for some time distressed, but at last obtained, I hope from the God of Peace, more quiet than I have enjoyed for a long time. I had made no resolution, but as my heart grew lighter, my hopes revived, and my courage increased; and I wrote with my pencil in my Common Prayer Book:

"Vita ordinanda.
Biblia legenda.
Theologiæ opera danda.
Serviendum et lætandum."'

Mr. Steevens, whose generosity is well known, joined Dr. Johnson in kind assistance to a female relation of Dr. Goldsmith, and desired that on her return to Ireland she would procure authentic particulars of the life of her celebrated relation. Concerning her is the following letter:

TO GEORGE STEEVENS, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—You will be glad to hear that from Mrs. Goldsmith, whom we lamented as drowned, I have received a letter full of gratitude to us all, with promises to make the inquiries which we recommended to her.

'I would have had the honour of conveying this intelligence to Miss Caulfield, but that her letter is not at hand, and I know not the direction. You will tell the good news.—I am, sir, your most, etc., Sam. Johnson.

'*February* 25, 1777.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Feb.* 14, 1777.

'My dear Sir,—My state of epistolary accounts with you at present is extraordinary. The balance, as to number, is on your side. I am indebted to you for two letters; one dated the 16th of November, upon which very day I wrote to you,

so that our letters were exactly exchanged, and one dated the 21st of December last.

'My heart was warmed with gratitude by the truly kind contents of both of them; and it is amazing and vexing that I have allowed so much time to elapse without writing to you. But delay is inherent in me, by nature or by bad habit. I waited till I should have an opportunity of paying you my compliments on a new year. I have procrastinated till the new year is no longer new.

. . . . .

'Dr. Memis's cause was determined against him with £40 costs. The Lord President, and two other of the judges, dissented from the majority, upon this ground: that although there may have been no intention to injure him by calling him *Doctor of Medicine* instead of *Physician*, yet, as he remonstrated against the designation before the charter was printed off, and represented that it was disagreeable, and even hurtful to him, it was ill-natured to refuse to alter it, and let him have the designation to which he was certainly entitled. My own opinion is, that our court has judged wrong. The defendants were *in mala fide*, to persist in naming him in a way that he disliked. You remember poor Goldsmith, when he grew important, and wished to appear *Doctor Major*, could not bear your calling him *Goldy*. Would it not have been wrong to have named him so in your 'Preface to Shakespeare,' or in any serious permanent writing of any sort? The difficulty is, whether an action should be allowed on such petty wrongs. *De minimis non curat lex.*

'The negro cause is not yet decided. A memorial is preparing on the side of slavery. I shall send you a copy as soon as it is printed. Maclaurin is made happy by your approbation of his memorial for the black.

'Macquarry was here in the winter, and we passed an evening together. The sale of his estate cannot be prevented.

'Sir Allan Maclean's suit against the Duke of Argyll, for recovering the ancient inheritance of his family, is now fairly before all our judges. I spoke for him yesterday, and Maclaurin to-day; Crosbie spoke to-day against him. Three more counsel are to be heard, and next week the cause will

be determined. I send you the *Informations*, or *Cases*, on each side, which I hope you will read. You said to me when we were under Sir Allan's hospitable roof, "I will help him with my pen." You said it with a generous glow; and though his Grace of Argyll did afterwards mount you upon an excellent horse, upon which "you looked like a bishop," you must not swerve from your purpose at Inchkenneth. I wish you may understand the points at issue, amidst our Scotch law principles and phrases.

[Here followed a full state of the case, in which I endeavoured to make it as clear as I could to an Englishman who had no knowledge of the formularies and technical language of the law of Scotland.]

'I shall inform you how the cause is decided here. But as it may be brought under the review of our judges, and is certainly to be carried by appeal to the House of Lords, the assistance of such a mind as yours will be of consequence. Your paper on *Vicious Intromission* is a noble proof of what you can do even in Scotch law.

. . . . .

'I have not yet distributed all your books. Lord Hailes and Lord Monboddo have each received one, and return you thanks. Monboddo dined with me lately, and having drunk tea, we were a good while by ourselves, and as I knew that he had read the *Journey* superficially, as he did not talk of it as I wished, I brought it to him, and read aloud several passages; and then he talked so, that I told him he was to have a copy *from the author*. He begged *that* might be marked on it.

. . . . .

—I ever am, my dear sir, your most faithful and affectionate humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

SIR ALEXANDER DICK TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Prestonfield, Feb.* 17, 1777.

'SIR,—I had yesterday the honour of receiving your book of your *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, which you were so good as to send me by the hands of our mutual friend, Mr. Boswell, of Auchinleck; for which I return you

my most hearty thanks; and after carefully reading it over again, shall deposit it in my little collection of choice books, next our worthy friend's *Journey to Corsica*. As there are many things to admire in both performances, I have often wished that no travels or journey should be published but those undertaken by persons of integrity and capacity, to judge well, and describe faithfully, and in good language, the situation, condition, and manners of the countries passed through. Indeed, our country of Scotland, in spite of the union of the crowns, is still in most places so devoid of clothing or cover from hedges and plantations, that it was well you gave your readers a sound *Monitoire* with respect to that circumstance. The truths you have told, and the purity of the language in which they are expressed, as your *Journey* is universally read, may, and already appear to have a very good effect. For a man of my acquaintance, who has the largest nursery for trees and hedges in the country, tells me, that of late the demand upon him for these articles is doubled and sometimes tripled. I have, therefore, listed Dr. Samuel Johnson in some of my memorandums of the principal planters and favourers of the enclosures, under a name which I took the liberty to invent from the Greek, *Papadendrion*. Lord Auchinleck and some few more are of the list. I am told that one gentleman in the shire of Aberdeen, viz., Sir Archibald Grant, has planted above fifty millions of trees on a piece of very wild ground at Monimusk: I must inquire if he has fenced them well, before he enters my list; for that is the soul of enclosing. I began myself to plant a little, our ground being too valuable for much, and that is now fifty years ago: and the trees, now in my seventy-fourth year, I look up to with reverence, and show them to my eldest son, now in his fifteenth year, and they are full the height of my country house here, where I had the pleasure of receiving you, and hope again to have that satisfaction with our mutual friend,[1] Mr. Boswell. I shall always continue, with the truest esteem, dear Doctor, your most obliged and obedient humble servant,

ALEXANDER DICK.

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[1] [Dr. Hill points out that Burke, in his correspondence, employs this expression —A. B.]

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—It is so long since I heard anything from you that I am not easy about it; write something to me next post. When you sent your last letter everything seemed to be mending; I hope nothing has lately grown worse. I suppose young Alexander continues to thrive, and Veronica is now very pretty company. I do not suppose the lady is yet reconciled to me, yet let her know that I love her very well, and value her very much.

'Dr. Blair is printing some sermons. If they are all like the first, which I have read, they are *sermones aurei, ac auro magis aurei*. It is excellently written both as to doctrine and language. Mr. Watson's book[1] seems to be much esteemed.[2]

. . . . .

'Poor Beauclerk still continues very ill. Langton lives on as he used to do. His children are very pretty, and, I think, his lady loses her Scotch. Paoli I never see.

'I have been so distressed by difficulty of breathing, that I lost, as was computed, six-and-thirty ounces of blood in a few days. I am better, but not well.

'I wish you would be vigilant and get me Graham's *Telemachus*, that was printed at Glasgow, a very little book; and *Johnstoni Poemata*, another little book, printed at Middleburgh.

'Mrs. Williams sends her compliments, and promises that when you come hither she will accommodate you as well as ever she can in the old room. She wishes to know whether you sent her book to Sir Alexander Gordon.

'My dear Boswell, do not neglect to write to me: for your kindness is one of the pleasures of my life, which I should be sorry to lose.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON

'*February* 18, 1777.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Feb.* 24, 1777.

'DEAR SIR,—Your letter dated the 18th instant, I had the pleasure to receive last post. Although my late long neglect,

[1] *History of Philip the Second.*

[2] [This is now a regular bookseller's phrase.—A. B.]

or rather delay, was truly culpable, I am tempted not to regret it, since it has produced me so valuable a proof of your regard. I did, indeed, during that inexcusable silence sometimes divert the reproaches of my own mind, by fancying that I should hear again from you, inquiring with some anxiety about me, because, for aught you knew, I might have been ill.

'You are pleased to show me that my kindness is of some consequence to you. My heart is elated at the thought. Be assured, my dear sir, that my affection and reverence for you are exalted and steady. I do not believe that a more perfect attachment ever existed in the history of mankind. And it is a noble attachment; for the attractions are genius, learning, and piety.

'Your difficulty of breathing alarms me, and brings into my imagination an event, which, although in the natural course of things I must expect at some period, I cannot view with composure.

. . . . .

'My wife is much honoured by what you say of her. She begs you may accept of her best compliments. She is to send you some marmalade of oranges of her own making.

. . . . . .

—I ever am, my dear sir, your most obliged and faithful humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have been much pleased with your late letter, and am glad that my old enemy, Mrs. Boswell, begins to feel some remorse. As to Miss Veronica's Scotch, I think it cannot be helped. An English maid you might easily have; but she would still imitate the greater number, as they would be likewise those whom she must most respect. Her dialect will not be gross. Her mamma has not much Scotch, and you have yourself very little. I hope she knows my name, and does not call me *Johnston*.[1]

[1] John*son* is the most common English formation of the surname from *John*; John*ston* the Scotch. My illustrious friend observed, that many North Britons pronounced his name in their own way.

'The immediate cause of my writing is this:—One Shaw, who seems a modest and a decent man, has written an Erse Grammar, which a very learned Highlander, Macbean, has, at my request, examined and approved.

'The book is very little, but Mr. Shaw has been persuaded by his friends to set it at half a guinea, though I advised only a crown, and thought myself liberal. You whom the author considers as a great encourager of ingenious men will receive a parcel of his proposals and receipts. I have undertaken to give you notice of them and to solicit your countenance. You must ask no poor man, because the price is really too high. Yet such a work deserves patronage.

'It is proposed to augment our club from twenty to thirty, of which I am glad; for as we have several in it whom I do not much like to consort with,[1] I am for reducing it to a mere miscellaneous collection of conspicuous men, without any determinate character. . . .—I am, dear sir, most affectionately yours, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March* 14, 1777.

'My respects to Madam, to Veronica, to Alexander, to Euphemia, to David.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, April* 4, 1777.

[AFTER informing him of the death of my little son David, and that I could not come to London this spring:]

'I think it hard that I should be a whole year without seeing you. May I presume to petition for a meeting with you in the autumn? You have, I believe, seen all the cathedrals in England except that of Carlisle. If you are to be with Dr. Taylor at Ashbourne, it would not be a great journey to come thither. We may pass a few most agreeable days there by ourselves, and I will accompany you a good part of the way to the southward again. Pray think of this.

'You forget that Mr. Shaw's Erse Grammar was put into your hands by myself last year. Lord Eglintoune put it into mine. I am glad that Mr. Macbean approves of it. I have

[1] On account of their differing from him as to religion and politics.

received Mr. Shaw's proposals for its publication, which I can perceive are written *by the hand of a master.*

. . . . . .

'Pray get me all the editions of Walton's *Lives.* I have a notion that the republication of them with notes will fall upon me, between Dr. Horne and Lord Hailes.'[1]

Mr. Shaw's proposals for *An Analysis of the Scotch Celtic Language,* were thus illuminated by the pen of Johnson:

'Though the Erse dialect of the Celtic language has, from the earliest times, been spoken in Britain, and still subsists in the northern parts and adjacent islands, yet, by the negligence of a people rather warlike than lettered, it has hitherto been left to the caprice and judgment of every speaker, and has floated in the living voice, without the steadiness of analogy or direction of rules. An Erse Grammar is an addition to the stores of literature; and its author hopes for the indulgence always shown to those that attempt to do what was never done before. If his work shall be found defective it is at least all his own: he is not like other grammarians, a compiler or transcriber; what he delivers he has learned by attentive observation among his countrymen, who perhaps will be themselves surprised to see that speech reduced to principles which they have used only by imitation.

'The use of this book will, however, not be confined to the mountains and islands; it will afford a pleasing and important subject of speculation to those whose studies lead them to trace the affinity of languages and the migrations of the ancient races of mankind.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Glasgow, April* 24, 1777.

'My dear Sir,—Our worthy friend Thrale's death having appeared in the newspapers, and been afterwards contradicted, I have been placed in a state of very uneasy uncertainty,

[1] [None of the persons here mentioned executed the work which they had in contemplation. Walton's valuable book, however, has been correctly republished in quarto, with notes and illustrations, by the Rev. Mr. Zouch.—M.]

from which I hoped to be relieved by you: but my hopes have as yet been vain. How could you omit to write to me on such an occasion? I shall wait with anxiety.

'I am going to Auchinleck to stay a fortnight with my father. It is better not to be there very long at one time. But frequent renewals of attention are agreeable to him.

'Pray tell me about this edition of the *English Poets*, with a Preface, biographical and critical, to each Author, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D., which I see advertised. I am delighted with the prospect of it. Indeed I am happy to feel that I am capable of being so much delighted with literature. But is not the charm of this publication chiefly owing to the *magnum nomen* in the front of it?

'What do you say of Lord Chesterfield's Memoirs and last Letters?

'My wife has made marmalade of oranges for you. I left her and my daughters and Alexander all well yesterday. I have taught Veronica to speak of you thus;—Dr. John*son*, not John*ston*.—I remain, my dear sir, your most affectionate and obliged humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—The story of Mr. Thrale's death, as he had neither been sick nor in any other danger, made so little impression upon me that I never thought about obviating its effects on anybody else. It is supposed to have been produced by the English custom of making April fools, that is, of sending one another on some foolish errand on the first of April.

'Tell Mrs. Boswell that I shall taste her marmalade cautiously at first. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.* Beware, says the Italian proverb, of a reconciled enemy. But when I find it does me no harm I shall then receive it and be thankful for it as a pledge of firm, and, I hope, of unalterable kindness. She is, after all, a dear, dear lady.

'Please to return Dr. Blair thanks for his sermons. The Scotch write English wonderfully well.

. . . . .

'Your frequent visits to Auchinleck, and your short stay there, are very laudable and very judicious. Your present

concord with your father gives me great pleasure; it was all that you seemed to want.

'My health is very bad and my nights are very unquiet. What can I do to mend them? I have for this summer nothing better in prospect than a journey into Staffordshire and Derbyshire, perhaps with Oxford and Birmingham in my way.

'Make my compliments to Miss Veronica; I must leave it to *her* philosophy to comfort you for the loss of little David. You must remember, that to keep three out of four is more than your share. Mrs. Thrale has but four out of eleven.

'I am engaged to write little Lives and little Prefaces to a little edition of the *English Poets*. I think I have persuaded the booksellers to insert something of Thomson; and if you could give me some information about him, for the life which we have is very scanty, I should be glad.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 3, 1777.'

To those who delight in tracing the progress of works of literature, it will be an entertainment to compare the limited design with the ample execution of that admirable performance, the *Lives of the English Poets*, which is the richest, most beautiful, and indeed most perfect, production of Johnson's pen. His notion of it at this time appears in the preceding letter. He has a memorandum in this year, '29 May, Easter Eve, I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long.'[1] The bargain was concerning that undertaking; but his tender conscience seems alarmed lest it should have intruded too much on his devout preparation for the solemnity of the ensuing day. But, indeed, very little time was necessary for Johnson's concluding a treaty with the booksellers; as he had, I believe, less attention to profit from his labours than

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 155.

any man to whom literature has been a profession. I shall here insert from a letter to me from my late worthy friend Mr. Edward Dilly, though of a later date, an account of this plan so happily conceived; since it was the occasion of procuring for us an elegant collection of the best biography and criticism of which our language can boast.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'*Southhill, Sept.* 26, 1777.

'DEAR SIR,—You will find by this letter that I am still in the same calm retreat from the noise and bustle of London, as when I wrote to you last. I am happy to find you had such an agreeable meeting with your old friend Dr. Johnson: I have no doubt your stock is much increased by the interview; few men, nay, I may say, scarcely any man, has got that fund of knowledge and entertainment as Dr. Johnson in conversation. When he opens freely every one is attentive to what he says, and cannot fail of improvement as well as pleasure.

'The edition of the Poets, now printing, will do honour to the English press; and a concise account of the life of each author, by Dr. Johnson, will be a very valuable addition, and stamp the reputation of this edition superior to anything that is gone before. The first cause that gave rise to this undertaking, I believe, was owing to the little trifling edition of the Poets, printing by the Martins at Edinburgh, and to be sold by Bell, in London. Upon examining the volumes which were printed the type was found so extremely small that many persons could not read them; not only this inconvenience attended it, but the inaccuracy of the press was very conspicuous. These reasons, as well as the idea of an invasion of what we call our Literary Property, induced the London Booksellers to print an elegant and accurate edition of all the English poets of reputation, from Chaucer to the present time.

'Accordingly a select number of the most respectable booksellers met on the occasion; and, on consulting together,

agreed that all the proprietors of copyright in the various poets should be summoned together; and when their opinions were given, to proceed immediately on the business. Accordingly a meeting was held, consisting of about forty of the most respectable booksellers of London, when it was agreed that an elegant and uniform edition of *The English Poets* should be immediately printed, with a concise account of the life of each author, by Dr. Samuel Johnson; and that three persons should be deputed to wait upon Dr. Johnson to solicit him to undertake the Lives, viz., T. Davies, Strahan, and Cadell. The Doctor very politely undertook it, and seemed exceedingly pleased with the proposal. As to the terms, it was left entirely to the Doctor to name his own; he mentioned two hundred guineas;[1] it was immediately agreed to; and a further compliment, I believe, will be made him. A committee was likewise appointed to engage the best engravers, viz. Bartolozzi, Sherwin, Hall, etc. Likewise another committee for giving directions about the paper, printing, etc., so that the whole will be conducted with spirit, and in the best manner, with respect to authorship, editorship, engravings, etc. etc. My brother will give you a list of the Poets we mean to give, many of which are within the time of the Act of Queen Anne, which Martin and Bell cannot give, as they have no property in them; the proprietors are almost all the booksellers in London of consequence.—I am, dear sir, ever yours, EDWARD DILLY.'

I shall afterwards have occasion to consider the extensive and varied range which Johnson took, when he was once led upon ground which he trod with a peculiar delight, having long been intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of it that could interest and please.

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[1] [Johnson's moderation in demanding so small a sum is extraordinary. Had he asked one thousand, or even fifteen hundred guineas, the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it. They have probably got five thousand guineas by this work in the course of twenty-five years.—M.]

DR. JOHNSON TO CHARLES O'CONNOR, ESQ.[1]

'SIR,—Having had the pleasure of conversing with Dr. Campbell about your character and your literary undertaking, I am resolved to gratify myself by renewing a correspondence which began and ended a great while ago, and ended, I am afraid, by my fault; a fault which, if you have not forgotten it, you must now forgive.

'If I have ever disappointed you, give me leave to tell you that you have likewise disappointed me. I expected great discoveries in Irish antiquity, and large publications in the Irish language; but the world still remains as it was, doubtful and ignorant. What the Irish language is in itself, and to what languages it has affinity, are very interesting questions, which every man wishes to see resolved that has any philological or historical curiosity. Dr. Leland begins his history too late: the ages which deserve an exact inquiry are those times (for such there were) when Ireland was the school of the west, the quiet habitation of sanctity and literature. If you could give a history, though imperfect, of the Irish nation, from its conversion to Christianity to the invasion from England, you would amplify knowledge with new views and new objects. Set about it therefore, if you can: do what you can easily do without anxious exactness. Lay the foundation and leave the superstructure to posterity.—I am, sir, your humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 19, 1777.'

Early in this year came out, in two volumes quarto, the posthumous works of the learned Dr. Zachary

[1] Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker, of the Treasury, Dublin, who obligingly communicated to me this and a former letter from Dr. Johnson to the same gentleman (for which see vol. i. p. 263), writes to me as follows:—'Perhaps it would gratify you to have some account of Mr O'Connor. He is an amiable, learned, venerable old gentleman, of an independent fortune, who lives at Belanagar, in the county of Roscommon; he is an admired writer, and Member of the Irish Academy. The above letter is alluded to in the Preface to the 2nd edit. of his *Dissert.* p. 3.' Mr. O'Connor afterwards died at the age of eighty-two, July 1, 1791. See a well-drawn character of him in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1791.

Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, being *A Commentary, with Notes, on the Four Evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles*, with other theological pieces. Johnson had now an opportunity of making a grateful return to that excellent prelate, who, we have seen, was the only person who gave him any assistance in the compilation of his *Dictionary*. The Bishop had left some account of his life and character, written by himself. To this Johnson made some valuable additions, and also furnished to the editor, the Reverend Mr. Derby, a dedication, which I shall here insert, both because it will appear at this time with peculiar propriety, and because it will tend to propagate and increase that 'fervour of *Loyalty*,' which in me, who boast of the name of Tory, is not only a principle but a passion.

TO THE KING

'Sir,—I presume to lay before your Majesty the last labours of a learned Bishop, who died in the toils and duties of his calling. He is now beyond the reach of all earthly honours and rewards; and only the hope of inciting others to imitate him makes it now fit to be remembered, that he enjoyed in his life the favour of your Majesty.

'The tumultuary life of Princes seldom permits them to survey the wide extent of national interest without losing sight of private merit; to exhibit qualities which may be imitated by the highest and the humblest of mankind; and to be at once amiable and great.

'Such characters, if now and then they appear in history, are contemplated with admiration. May it be the ambition of all your subjects to make haste with their tribute of reverence; and as posterity may learn from your Majesty how Kings should live, may they learn likewise from your people how they should be honoured.—I am, may it please your Majesty, with the most profound respect, your Majesty's most dutiful and devoted subject and servant.'

In the summer he wrote a Prologue which was spoken before *A Word to the Wise*, a comedy by Mr. Hugh Kelly, which had been brought upon the stage in 1770, but he being a writer for ministry in one of the newspapers, it fell a sacrifice to popular fury, and, in the playhouse phrase, was *damned*. By the generosity of Mr. Harris, the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, it was now exhibited for one night, for the benefit of the author's widow and children. To conciliate the favour of the audience was the intention of Johnson's Prologue, which, as it is not long, I shall here insert, as a proof that his poetical talents were in no degree impaired:

'This night presents a play, which public rage,
Or right or wrong, once hooted from the stage:
From zeal or malice, now no more we dread,
For English vengeance *wars not with the dead*.
A generous foe regards with pitying eye
The man whom Fate has laid where all must lie.
To wit, reviving from its author's dust,
Be kind, ye judges, or at least be just:
Let no renewed hostilities invade
Th' oblivious grave's inviolable shade.
Let one great payment every claim appease,
And him who cannot hurt, allow to please;
To please by scenes, unconscious of offence,
By harmless merriment, or useful sense.
Where aught of bright or fair the piece displays,
Approve it only;—'tis too late to praise.
If want of skill or want of care appear,
Forbear to hiss; the poet cannot hear.
By all, like him, must praise and blame be found,
At last, a fleeting gleam, or empty sound;
Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night,
When liberal pity dignified delight;
When pleasure fired her torch at virtue's flame,
And mirth was bounty with an humbler name.'

A circumstance which could not fail to be very pleasing to Johnson occurred this year. The tragedy of *Sir Thomas Overbury*, written by his early companion in London, Richard Savage, was brought up with alterations at Drury Lane Theatre. The Prologue to it was written by Mr. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in which, after describing very pathetically the wretchedness of

> 'Ill-fated Savage, at whose birth was giv'n
> No parent but the Muse, no friend but Heav'n,'

he introduced an elegant compliment to Johnson on his *Dictionary*, that wonderful performance which cannot be too often or too highly praised, of which Mr. Harris in his *Philological Inquiries*,[1] justly and liberally observes: 'Such is its merit, that our language does not possess a more copious, learned, and valuable work.' The concluding lines of this Prologue were these:

> 'So pleads the tale[2] that gives to future times
> The son's misfortunes and the parent's crimes;
> There shall his fame (if own'd to-night) survive,
> Fix'd by THE HAND THAT BIDS OUR LANGUAGE LIVE.

Mr. Sheridan here at once did honour to his taste and to his liberality of sentiment, by showing that he was not prejudiced from the unlucky difference which had taken place between his worthy father and Dr. Johnson. I have already mentioned that Johnson was very desirous of reconciliation with old Mr. Sheridan. It will, therefore, not seem at all surprising that he was zealous in acknowledging the brilliant merit of his son. While it had as yet been displayed

[1] Part i. chap. 4.
[2] '*Life of Richard Savage*, by Dr. Johnson.'

only in the drama, Johnson proposed him as a member of The Literary Club, observing, that 'He who has written the two best comedies of his age is surely a considerable man.' And he had, accordingly, the honour to be elected; for an honour it undoubtedly must be allowed to be, when it is considered of whom that society consists, and that a single black ball excludes a candidate.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*July* 9, 1777.

'My dear Sir,—For the health of my wife and children I have taken the little country-house at which you visited my uncle, Dr. Boswell, who, having lost his wife, is gone to live with his son. We took possession of our villa about a week ago; we have a garden of three quarters of an acre, well stocked with fruit-trees and flowers, and gooseberries and currants, and peas and beans, and cabbages, etc. etc., and my children are quite happy. I now write to you in a little study, from the window of which I see around me a verdant grove, and beyond it the lofty mountain called Arthur's Seat.

'Your last letter, in which you desire me to send you some additional information concerning Thomson, reached me very fortunately just as I was going to Lanark to put my wife's two nephews, the young Campbells, to school there, under the care of Mr. Thomson, the master of it, whose wife is sister to the author of *The Seasons*. She is an old woman, but her memory is very good, and she will with pleasure give me for you every particular that you wish to know and she can tell. Pray then take the trouble to send me such questions as may lead to biographical materials. You say that the Life which we have of Thomson is scanty. Since I received your letter I have read his Life, published under the name of Cibber, but as you told me, really written by a Mr. Shiels;[1] that written by Dr. Murdoch; one prefixed to an edition of *The Seasons*, published at Edinburgh, which is compounded of

[1] See p. 39 of this volume.

both, with the addition of an anecdote of Quin's relieving Thomson from prison; the abridgment of Murdoch's account of him in the *Biographia Britannica*, and another abridgment of it in the *Biographical Dictionary*, enriched with Dr. Joseph Warton's critical panegyric on *The Seasons* in his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*: from all these it appears to me that we have a pretty full account of this poet. However, you will, I doubt not, show me many blanks, and I shall do what can be done to have them filled up. As Thomson never returned to Scotland (which *you* will think very wise), his sister can speak from her own knowledge only as to the early part of his life. She has some letters from him which may probably give light as to his more advanced progress, if she will let us see them, which I suppose she will. I believe George Lewis Scott[1] and Dr. Armstrong are now his only surviving companions while he lived in and about London; and they, I daresay, can tell more of him than is yet known. My own notion is, that Thomson was a much coarser man than his friends are willing to acknowledge. His *Seasons* are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments: but a rank soil, nay a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.

'Your edition[2] of the *English Poets* will be very valuable on account of the "Prefaces and Lives." But I have seen a specimen of an edition of the Poets at the Apollo press, at Edinburgh, which, for excellence in printing and engraving, highly deserves a liberal encouragement.

'Most sincerely do I regret the bad health and bad rest with which you have been afflicted; and I hope you are better. I cannot believe that the prologue which you generously gave to Mr. Kelly's widow and children the other day is the effusion

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[1] [George Lewis Scott, Esq., F.R.S., an amiable and learned man, formerly Sub-preceptor to his present Majesty, and afterwards appointed a Commissioner of Excise. He died in 1780.—M.]

[2] [Dr. Johnson was not the *editor* of this Collection of the *English Poets*; he merely furnished the biographical prefaces with which it is enriched; as it is rightly stated in a subsequent page.

He indeed, from a virtuous motive, recommended the works of four or five poets (whom he has named) to be added to the collection; but he is no otherwise answerable for any which are found there, or any which are omitted. The poems of Goldsmith (whose Life I know he intended to write, for I collected some materials for it by his desire) were omitted in consequence of a petty exclusive interest in some of them, vested in Mr. Carnan, a bookseller.—M.]

of one in sickness and in disquietude: but external circumstances are never sure indications of the state of man. I send you a letter which I wrote to you two years ago at Wilton; and did not send it at the time for fear of being reproved as indulging too much tenderness; and one written to you at the tomb of Melanchthon, which I kept back lest I should appear at once too superstitious and too enthusiastic. I now imagine that perhaps they may please you.

'You do not take the least notice of my proposal for our meeting at Carlisle.[1] Though I have meritoriously refrained from visiting London this year, I ask you if it would not be wrong that I should be two years without having the benefit of your conversation, when, if you come down as far as Derbyshire, we may meet at the expense of a few days' journeying, and not many pounds. I wish you to see Carlisle, which made me mention that place. But if you have not a desire to complete your tour of the English cathedrals I will take a larger share of the road between this place and Ashbourne. So tell me *where* you will fix for our passing a few days by ourselves. Now don't cry "foolish fellow," or "idle dog." Chain your humour and let your kindness play.

'You will rejoice to hear that Miss Macleod of Raasay is married to Colonel Mure Campbell, an excellent man, with a pretty good estate of his own, and the prospect of having the Earl of Loudoun's fortune and honours. Is not this a noble lot for our fair Hebridean? How happy am I that she is to be in Ayrshire. We shall have the Laird of Raasay, and old Malcolm, and I know not how many gallant Macleods, and bagpipes, etc. etc., at Auchinleck. Perhaps you may meet them all there.

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[1] Dr. Johnson had himself talked of our seeing Carlisle together. *High* was a favourite word of his to denote a person of rank. He said to me, 'Sir, I believe we may meet at the house of a Roman Catholic lady in Cumberland; a high lady, sir.' I afterwards discovered that he meant Mrs. Strickland, sister of Charles Townley, Esq., whose very noble collection of statues and pictures is not more to be admired than his extraordinary and polite readiness in showing it, which I and several of my friends have agreeably experienced. They who are possessed of valuable stores of gratification to persons of taste should exercise their benevolence in imparting the pleasure. Grateful acknowledgments are due to Welbore Ellis Agar, Esq., for the liberal access which he is pleased to allow to his exquisite collection of pictures.

'Without doubt you have read what is called "The *Life* of David Hume," written by himself, with the letter from Dr. Adam Smith subjoined to it. Is not this an age of daring effrontery? My friend Mr. Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow, at whose house you and I supped, and to whose care Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, was intrusted at that University, paid me a visit lately: and after we had talked with indignation and contempt of the poisonous productions with which this age is infested, he said there was now an excellent opportunity for Dr. Johnson to step forth. I agreed with him that you might knock Hume's and Smith's heads together, and make vain and ostentatious infidelity exceedingly ridiculous. Would it not be worth your while to crush such noxious weeds in the moral garden?

'You have said nothing to me of Dr. Dodd. I know not how you think on that subject; though the newspapers give us a saying of yours in favour of mercy to him. But I own I am very desirous that the royal prerogative of remission of punishment should be employed to exhibit an illustrious instance of the regard which God's vicegerent will ever show to piety and virtue. If for ten righteous men the Almighty would have spared Sodom, shall not a thousand acts of goodness done by Dr. Dodd counterbalance one crime? Such an instance would do more to encourage goodness than his execution would do to deter from vice. I am not afraid of any bad consequence to society; for who will persevere for a long course of years in a distinguished discharge of religious duties, with a view to commit a forgery with impunity?

'Pray make my best compliments acceptable to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, by assuring them of my hearty joy that the *Master*, as you call him, is alive. I hope I shall often taste his champagne—*soberly*.

'I have not heard from Langton for a long time. I suppose he is as usual,

"Studious the busy moments to deceive."

. . . . . .

'I remain, my dear sir, your most affectionate and faithful humble servant, James Boswell.'

On the 23rd of June I again wrote to Dr. Johnson,

enclosing a shipmaster's receipt for a jar of orange marmalade, and a large packet of Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland*.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have just received your packet from Mr. Thrale's, but have not daylight enough to look much into it. I am glad that I have credit enough with Lord Hailes to be trusted with more copy. I hope to take more care of it than of the last. I return Mrs. Boswell my affectionate thanks for her present, which I value as a token of reconciliation.

'Poor Dodd was put to death yesterday,[1] in opposition to the recommendation of the jury, the petition of the city of London, and a subsequent petition signed by three-and-twenty thousand hands. Surely the voice of the public, when it calls so loudly, and only for mercy, ought to be heard.

'The saying that was given me in the papers I never spoke; but I wrote many of his petitions, and some of his letters. He applied to me very often. He was, I am afraid, long flattered with hopes of life; but I had no part in the dreadful delusion; for as soon as the King had signed his sentence, I obtained from Mr. Chamier an account of the disposition of the court towards him, with a declaration that there *was no hope even of a respite*. This letter immediately was laid before Dodd; but he believed those whom he wished to be right, as it is thought, till within three days of his end. He died with pious composure and resolution. I have just seen the Ordinary that attended him. His address to his fellow-convicts offended the Methodists; but he had a Moravian with him much of his time. His moral character is very bad: I hope all is not true that is charged upon him. Of his behaviour in prison an account will be published.

'I give you joy of your country-house, and your pretty

[1] [For forgery. Dodd took mathematical honours at Cambridge in 1749, and is still year after year referred to in the University Calendar as the author of *Thoughts in Prison*. How he came to be in prison, and for what purpose he was taken thence, is not thought worth recording.—A. B.]

garden; and hope some time to see you in your felicity. I was much pleased with your two letters that had been kept long in store;[1] and rejoice at Miss Raasay's advancement, and wish Sir Allan success.

'I hope to meet you somewhere towards the north, but am loath to come quite to Carlisle. Can we not meet at Manchester? But we will settle it in some other letters.

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1 Since they have been so much honoured by Dr. Johnson, I shall here insert them:

TO MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'My ever dear and much respected Sir,—You know my solemn enthusiasm of mind. You love me for it, and I respect myself for it, because in so far I resemble Mr. Johnson. You will be agreeably surprised, when you learn the reason of my writing this letter. I am at Wittemberg in Saxony. I am in the old church where the Reformation was first preached, and where some of the Reformers lie interred. I cannot resist the serious pleasure of writing to Mr. Johnson from the tomb of Melanchthon. My paper rests upon the gravestone of that great and good man, who was undoubtedly the worthiest of all the reformers. He wished to reform abuses which had been introduced into the Church; but had no private resentment to gratify. So mild was he, that when his aged mother consulted him with anxiety on the perplexing disputes of the times, he advised her "to keep to the old religion." At this tomb, then, my ever dear and respected friend! I vow to thee an eternal attachment. It shall be my study to do what I can to render your life happy: and if you die before me, I shall endeavour to do honour to your memory; and, elevated by the remembrance of you, persist in noble piety. May God, the Father of all beings, ever bless you! and may you continue to love your most affectionate friend and devoted servant, James Boswell.

'*Sunday, Sept.* 30, 1764.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Wilton House, April* 22, 1775.

'My dear Sir,—Every scene of my life confirms the truth of what you have told me, "There is no certain happiness in this state of being." I am here, amidst all that you know is at Lord Pembroke's: and yet I am weary and gloomy. I am just setting out for the house of an old friend in Devonshire, and shall not get back to London for a week yet. You said to me last Good Friday, with a cordiality that warmed my heart, that if I came to settle in London, we should have a day fixed every week, to meet by ourselves and talk freely. To be thought worthy of such a privilege cannot but exalt me. During my present absence from you, while, notwithstanding the gaiety which you allow me to possess, I am darkened by temporary clouds, I beg to have a few lines from you; a few lines merely of kindness, as a *viaticum* till I see you again. In your *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and in Parnell's *Contentment*, I find the only sure means of enjoying happiness; or, at least, the hopes of happiness.—I ever am, with reverence and affection, most faithfully yours, James Boswell.'

'Mr. Seward,[1] a great favourite at Streatham, has been, I think, enkindled by our travels, with a curiosity to see the Highlands. I have given him letters to you and Beattie. He desires that a lodging may be taken for him at Edinburgh, against his arrival. He is just setting out.

'Langton has been exercising the militia. Mrs. Williams is, I fear, declining. Dr. Lawrence says he can do no more. She is gone to summer in the country, with as many conveniences about her as she can expect; but I have no great hope. We must all die: may we all be prepared!

'I suppose Miss Boswell reads her book, and young Alexander takes to his learning. Let me hear about them; for everything that belongs to you, belongs in a more remote degree, and not, I hope, very remote, to, dear sir, yours affectionately, SAM. JOHNSON.

June 28, 1777.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—This gentleman is a great favourite at Streatham, and therefore you will easily believe that he has very valuable qualities. Our narrative has kindled him with a desire of visiting the Highlands after having already seen a great part of Europe. You must receive him as a friend, and when you have directed him to the curiosities of Edinburgh, give him instructions and recommendations for the rest of his journey.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*June* 24, 1777.'

Johnson's benevolence to the unfortunate was, I am confident, as steady and active as that of any of those who have been most eminently distinguished for that virtue. Innumerable proofs of it I have no doubt will

[1] William Seward, Esq., F.R.S., editor of *Anecdotes of some Distinguished Persons*, etc., in four volumes, 8vo, well known to a numerous and valuable acquaintance for his literature, love of the fine arts, and social virtues. I am indebted to him for several communications concerning Johnson.

[This gentleman, who was born in 1747, and was educated at the Charter-House, and at Oxford, died in London, April 24, 1799.—M.]

be for ever concealed from mortal eyes. We may, however, form some judgment of it from the many and very various instances which have been discovered. One, which happened in the course of this summer, is remarkable from the name and connection of the person who was the object of it. The circumstance to which I allude is ascertained by two letters, one to Mr. Langton, and another to the Reverend Dr. Vyse, rector of Lambeth, son of the respectable clergyman at Lichfield, who was contemporary with Johnson, and in whose father's family Johnson had the happiness of being kindly received in his early years.

DR. JOHNSON TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—I have lately been much disordered by a difficulty of breathing, but am now better. I hope your house is well.

'You know we have been talking lately of St. Cross, at Winchester; I have an old acquaintance whose distress makes him very desirous of an hospital, and I am afraid I have not strength enough to get him into the Chartreux. He is a painter, who never rose higher than to get his immediate living, and from that, at eighty-three, he is disabled by a slight stroke of the palsy, such as does not make him at all helpless on common occasions, though his hand is not steady enough for his art.

'My request is, that you will try to obtain a promise of the next vacancy, from the Bishop of Chester. It is not a great thing to ask, and I hope we shall obtain it. Dr. Warton has promised to favour him with his notice, and I hope he may end his days in peace.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'Sam. Johnson.

'*June* 29, 1777.'

TO THE REV. DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH

'Sir,—I doubt not but you will readily forgive me for taking the liberty of requesting your assistance in recommend-

ing an old friend to his Grace the Archbishop as governor of the Charter House.

'His name is De Groot; he was born at Gloucester; I have known him many years. He has all the common claims to charity, being old, poor, and infirm in a great degree. He has likewise another claim, to which no scholar can refuse attention: he is by several descents the nephew of Hugo Grotius; of him from whom perhaps every man of learning has learnt something. Let it not be said that in any lettered country a nephew of Grotius asked a charity and was refused.—I am, reverend sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 9, 1777.'

[TO THE REV. DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH

'If any notice should be taken of the recommendation which I took the liberty of sending you, it will be necessary to know that Mr. De Groot is to be found at No. 8, in Pye Street, Westminster. This information, when I wrote, I could not give you; and being going soon to Lichfield, think it necessary to be left behind me.

'More I will not say. You will want no persuasion to succour the nephew of Grotius.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 22, 1777.']

THE REV. DR. VYSE TO MR. BOSWELL

'*Lambeth, June* 9, 1787.

'SIR,—I have searched in vain for the letter which I spoke of, and which I wished, at your desire, to communicate to you. It was from Dr. Johnson, to return me thanks for my application to Archbishop Cornwallis in favour of poor De Groot. He rejoices at the success it met with, and is lavish in the praise he bestows upon his favourite Hugo Grotius. I am really sorry that I cannot find this letter, as it is worthy of the writer. That which I send you enclosed[1] is at your service. It is very short, and will not perhaps be thought of any consequence, unless you should judge proper to consider

[1] The preceding letter.

it as a proof of the very humane part which Dr. Johnson took in behalf of a distressed and deserving person.—I am, sir, your most obedient humble servant, W. Vyse.'[1]

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. EDWARD DILLY

'Sir,—To the collection of English poets I have recommended the volume of Dr. Watts to be added; his name has long been held by me in veneration, and I would not willingly be reduced to tell of him only that he was born and died. Yet of his life I know very little, and therefore must pass him in a manner very unworthy of his character, unless some of his friends will favour me with the necessary information; many of them must be known to you: and by your influence perhaps I may obtain some instruction. My plan does not exact much; but I wish to distinguish Watts, a man who never wrote but for a good purpose. Be pleased to do for me what you can.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

'Sam. Johnson.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*
July 7, 1777.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, July* 15, 1777.

'My dear Sir,—The fate of poor Dr. Dodd made a dismal impression upon my mind.

. . . . . .

'I had sagacity enough to divine that you wrote his speech to the Recorder before sentence was pronounced. I am glad you have written so much for him; and I hope to be favoured with an exact list of the several pieces when we meet.

'I received Mr. Seward as the friend of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and as a gentleman recommended by Dr. Johnson to my

[1] [Dr. Vyse, at my request, was so obliging as once more to endeavour to recover the letter of Johnson, to which he alludes, but without success; for, April 22, 1800, he wrote to me thus: 'I have again searched, but in vain, for one of his letters, in which he speaks in his own nervous style of Hugo Grotius. De Groot was clearly a descendant of the family of Grotius, and Archbishop Cornwallis willingly complied with Dr. Johnson's request.'—M.]

attention. I have introduced him to Lord Kames, Lord Monboddo, and Mr. Nairne. He is gone to the Highlands with Dr. Gregory; when he returns, I shall do more for him.

'Sir Allan Maclean has carried that branch of his cause, of which we had good hopes; the President and one other judge only were against him. I wish the House of Lords may do as well as the Court of Session has done. But Sir Allan has not the lands of *Brolos* quite cleared by this judgment, till a long account is made up of debts and interest on the one side, and rents on the other. I am, however, not much afraid of the balance.

'Macquarry's estates, Staffa and all, were sold yesterday, and bought by a Campbell. I fear he will have little or nothing left out of the purchase-money.

'I send you the case against the negro, by Mr. Cullen, son to Dr. Cullen, in opposition to Maclaurin's for liberty, of which you have approved. Pray read this, and tell me what you think as a *politician*, as well as a *poet*, upon this subject.

'Be so kind as to let me know how your time is to be distributed next autumn. I will meet you at Manchester, or where you please; but I wish you would complete your tour of the cathedrals, and come to Carlisle, and I will accompany you a part of the way homewards.—I am ever, most faithfully yours, JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Your notion of the necessity of a yearly interview is very pleasing to both my vanity and tenderness. I shall, perhaps, come to Carlisle another year; but my money has not held out so well as it used to do. I shall go to Ashbourne, and I purpose to make Dr. Taylor invite you. If you live a while with me at his house, we shall have much time to ourselves, and our stay will be no expense to us or him. I shall leave London the 28th; and after some stay at Oxford and Lichfield, shall probably come to Ashbourne about the end of your session; but of all this you shall have notice. Be satisfied we will meet somewhere.

'What passed between me and poor Dr. Dodd, you shall know more fully when we meet.

'Of lawsuits there is no end; poor Sir Allan must have

another trial, for which, however, his antagonist cannot be much blamed, having two judges on his side. I am more afraid of the debts than of the House of Lords. It is scarcely to be imagined to what debts will swell, that are daily increasing by small additions, and how carelessly in a state of desperation debts are contracted. Poor Macquarry was far from thinking that when he sold his islands he should receive nothing. For what were they sold? And what was their yearly value? The admission of money into the Highlands will soon put an end to the feudal modes of life, by making those men landlords who were not chiefs. I do not know that the people will suffer by the change; but there was in the patriarchal authority something venerable and pleasing. Every eye must look with pain on a *Campbell* turning the *Macquarries* at will out of their *sedes avitæ*, their hereditary island.

'Sir Alexander Dick is the only Scotsman liberal enough not to be angry that I could not find trees, where trees were not. I was much delighted by his kind letter.

'I remember Raasay with too much pleasure not to partake of the happiness of any part of that amiable family. Our ramble in the islands hangs upon my imagination; I can hardly help imagining that we shall go again. Pennant seems to have seen a great deal which we did not see; when we travel again, let us look better about us.

'You have done right in taking your uncle's house. Some change in the form of life gives from time to time a new epocha of existence. In a new place there is something new to be done, and a different system of thoughts arises in the mind. I wish I could gather currants in your garden. Now fit up a little study, and have your books ready at hand; do not spare a little money, to make your habitation pleasing to yourself.

'I have dined lately with poor dear ——.[1] I do not think he goes on well. His table is rather coarse, and he has his children too much about him.[2] But he is a very good man.

[1] [Langton.—A. B.]

[2] This very just remark I hope will be constantly held in remembrance by parents, who are in general too apt to indulge their own fond feelings for their children at the expense of their friends. The common custom of introducing them after dinner is highly injudicious.

'Mrs. Williams is in the country, to try if she can improve her health; she is very ill. Matters have come so about, that she is in the country with very good accommodation; but age, and sickness, and pride, have made her so peevish, that I was forced to bribe the maid to stay with her, by a secret stipulation of half-a-crown a week over her wages.

'Our club ended its session about six weeks ago. We now only meet to dine once a fortnight. Mr. Dunning, the great lawyer, is one of our members. The Thrales are well.

'I long to know how the negro's cause will be decided. What is the opinion of Lord Auchinleck, or Lord Hailes, or Lord Monboddo?—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 22, 1777.'

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL

'MADAM,—Though I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received at the arrival of your jar of marmalade arose from eating it. I received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon this consideration I return you, dear madam, my sincerest thanks. By having your kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr. Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep, when the influence of a lady so highly and so justly valued operates against him. Mr. Boswell will tell you that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavoured to exalt you in his estimation. You must now do the same for me. We must all help one another, and you must now consider me as, dear madam, your most obliged and most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 22, 1777.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, July* 28, 1777.

'MY DEAR SIR,—This is the day on which you were to leave London, and I have been amusing myself in the intervals of

It is agreeable enough that they should appear at any other time; but they should not be suffered to poison the moments of festivity by attracting the attention of the company, and in a manner compelling them from politeness to say what they do not think.

my law-drudgery, with figuring you in the Oxford post-coach. I doubt, however, if you have had so merry a journey as you and I had in that vehicle last year, when you made so much sport with Gwyn, the architect. Incidents upon a journey are recollected with peculiar pleasure; they are preserved in brisk spirits, and come up again in our minds, tinctured with that gaiety, or at least that animation with which we first perceived them.'

. . . . .

[I added, that something had occurred, which I was afraid might prevent me from meeting him; and that my wife had been affected with complaints which threatened a consumption, but was now better.]

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—Do not disturb yourself about our interviews: I hope we shall have many; nor think it anything hard or unusual, that your design of meeting me is interrupted. We have both endured greater evils, and have greater evils to expect.

'Mrs. Boswell's illness makes a more serious distress. Does the blood rise from her lungs or from her stomach? From little vessels broken in the stomach there is no danger. Blood from the lungs is, I believe, always frothy, as mixed with wind. Your physicians know very well what is to be done. The loss of such a lady would, indeed, be very afflictive, and I hope she is in no danger. Take care to keep her mind as easy as is possible.

'I have left Langton in London. He has been down with the militia, and is again quiet at home, talking to his little people, as, I suppose, you do sometimes. Make my compliments to Miss Veronica.[1] The rest are too young for ceremony.

'I cannot but hope that you have taken your country house at a very seasonable time, and that it may conduce to restore or establish Mrs. Boswell's health, as well as provide room and exercise for the young ones. That you and your lady may

1 [This young lady, the author's eldest daughter, and at this time about five years old, died in London of a consumption, four months after her father, Sept. 26, 1795.—M.]

both be happy, and long enjoy your happiness, is the sincere and earnest wish of, dear sir, your most, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Oxford, Aug.* 4, 1777.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

[Informing him that my wife had continued to grow better, so that my alarming apprehensions were relieved; and that I hoped to disengage myself from the other embarrassment which had occurred, and therefore requesting to know particularly when he intended to be at Ashbourne.]

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I am this day come to Ashbourne, and have only to tell you, that Dr. Taylor says you shall be welcome to him, and you know how welcome you will be to me. Make haste to let me know when you may be expected.

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and tell her, I hope we shall be at variance no more.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Aug.* 30, 1776.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—On Saturday I wrote a very short letter, immediately upon my arrival hither, to show you that I am not less desirous of the interview than yourself. Life admits not of delays; when pleasure can be had, it is fit to catch it. Every hour takes away part of the things that please us, and perhaps part of our disposition to be pleased. When I came to Lichfield, I found my old friend Harry Jackson dead. It was a loss, and a loss not to be repaired, as he was one of the companions of my childhood. I hope we may long continue to gain friends; but the friends which merit or usefulness can procure us, are not able to supply the place of old acquaintance, with whom the days of youth may be retraced, and those images revived which gave the earliest delight. If you and I live to be much older, we shall take great delight in talking over the Hebridean Journey.

'In the meantime it may not be amiss to contrive some

other little adventure, but what it can be I know not; leave it, as Sidney says,

"To virtue, fortune, time, and woman's breast";[1]

for I believe Mrs. Boswell must have some part in the consultation.

'One thing you will like. The Doctor, so far as I can judge, is likely to leave us enough to ourselves. He was out to-day before I came down, and, I fancy, will stay out to

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[1] [By an odd mistake, in the first three editions we find a reading in this line, to which Dr. Johnson would by no means have subscribed; *wine* having been substituted for *time*. That error probably was a mistake in the transcript of Johnson's original letter, his handwriting being often very difficult to read. The other deviation in the beginning of the line (*virtue* instead of *nature*) must be attributed to his memory having deceived him; and therefore has not been disturbed.

The verse quoted is the concluding line of a sonnet of Sidney's, of which the earliest copy, I believe, is found in Harrington's translation of Ariosto, 1591, in the notes on the eleventh book:—'And therefore,' says he, 'that excellent verse of Sir Philip Sidney in his first *Arcadia*, which I know not by what mishap is left out in the printed booke [4to, 1590], is in mine opinion worthie to be praised and followed, to make a good and virtuous wife:

'"Who doth desire that chaste his wife should bee,
First be he true, for truth doth truth deserve;
Then be he such, as she his worth may see,
And, alwaies one, credit with her preserve:
Not toying kynd, nor causelessly unkynd,
Not stirring thoughts, nor yet denying right,
Not spying faults, nor in plaine errors blind,
Never hard hand, nor ever rayns [reins] too light;
As far from want, as far from vain expence,
Th' one doth enforce, the t'other doth entice:
Allow good companie, but drive from thence
All filthie mouths that glorie in their vice:
This done, thou hast no more but leave the rest
To *nature*, fortune, *time*, and woman's breast."'

I take this opportunity to add, that in England's *Parnassus*, a collection of poetry printed in 1600, the second couplet of this sonnet is thus corruptly exhibited:—

'Then *he be* such as *he* his *words* may see,
And alwaies one credit *which* her preserve':

a variation, which I the rather mention, because the readings of that book have been triumphantly quoted, when they happened to coincide with the sophistications of the second folio edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1632, as adding I know not what degree of authority and authenticity to the latter: as if the corruptions of one book (and that abounding with the grossest falsifications of the authors from whose works its extracts are made) could give any kind of support to another, which in every page is still more adulterated and unfaithful.—M.]

dinner. I have brought the papers about poor Dodd, to show you, but you will soon have despatched them.

'Before I came away, I sent poor Mrs. Williams into the country, very ill of a pituitous defluxion, which wastes her gradually away, and which her physician declares himself unable to stop. I supplied her as far as could be desired with all conveniences to make her excursion and abode pleasant and useful. But I am afraid she can only linger a short tim in a morbid state of weakness and pain.

'The Thrales, little and great, are all well, and purpose to go to Brighthelmstone at Michaelmas. They will invite me to go with them, and perhaps I may go, but I hardly think I shall like to stay the whole time; but of futurity we know but little.

'Mrs. Porter is well; but Mrs. Aston, one of the ladies at Stowhill, has been struck with a palsy, from which she is not likely ever to recover. How soon may such a stroke fall upon us!

'Write to me, and let us know when we may expect you. —I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Ashbourne, Sept.* 1, 1777.'

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Sept.* 9, 1777.

[AFTER informing him that I was to set out next day in order to meet him at Ashbourne:]

'I have a present for you from Lord Hailes, the fifth book of *Lactantius*, which he has published with Latin notes. He is also to give you a few anecdotes for your *Life* of Thomson who I find was private tutor to the present Earl of Haddington, Lord Hailes' cousin, a circumstance not mentioned by Dr. Murdoch. I have keen expectations of delight from your edition of the *English Poets*.[1]

'I am sorry for poor Mrs. Williams's situation. You will, however, have the comfort of reflecting on your kindness to her. Mr. Jackson's death and Mrs. Aston's palsy are gloomy circumstances. Yet surely we should be habituated to the

[1] [See p. 120 *n.*—M.]

uncertainty of life and health. When my mind is unclouded by melancholy I consider the temporary distresses of this state of being, as "light afflictions," by stretching my mental view into that glorious after-existence, when they will appear to be as nothing. But present pleasures and present pains must be felt. I lately read *Rasselas* over again with great satisfaction.

'Since you are desirous to hear about Macquarry's sale, I shall inform you particularly. The gentleman who purchased Ulva is Mr. Campbell of Auchnaha: our friend Macquarry was proprietor of two-thirds of it, of which the rent was £156, 5s. 1½d. This parcel was set up at £4069, 5s. 1d., but it sold for no less than £5540. The other third of Ulva, with the island of Staffa, belonged to Macquarry of Ormaig. Its rent, including that of Staffa, £83, 12s. 2½d.—set up at £2178, 16s. 4d.—sold for no less than £3540. The Laird of Coll wished to purchase Ulva, but he thought the price too high. There may, indeed, be great improvements made there, both in fishing and agriculture; but the interest of the purchase-money exceeds the rent so very much that I doubt if the bargain will be profitable. There is an island called Little Colonsay, of £10 yearly rent, which I am informed has belonged to the Macquarrys of Ulva for many ages, but which was lately claimed by the Presbyterian Synod of Argyll in consequence of a grant made to them by Queen Anne. It is believed that their claim will be dismissed, and that Little Colonsay will also be sold for the advantage of Macquarry's creditors. What think you of purchasing this island and endowing a school or college there, the master to be a clergyman of the church of England? How venerable would such an institution make the name of Dr. Samuel Johnson in the Hebrides! I have, like yourself, wonderful pleasure in recollecting our travels in those islands. The pleasure is, I think, greater than it reasonably should be, considering that we had not much either of beauty or elegance to charm our imaginations, or of rude novelty to astonish. Let us, by all means, have another expedition. I shrink a little from our scheme of going up the Baltic.[1] I am sorry you have already been in

[1] It appears that Johnson, now in his sixty-eighth year, was seriously inclined to realise the project of our going up the Baltic, which I had

Wales, for I wish to see it. Shall we go to Ireland, of which I have seen but little? We shall try to strike out a plan when we are at Ashbourne.—I am ever, your most faithful humble servant,

JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I write to be left at Carlisle, as you direct me; but you cannot have it. Your letter, dated Sept. 6, was not at this place till this day, Thursday, Sept. 11; and I hope you will be here before this is at Carlisle.[1] However, what you have not going, you may have returning; and as I believe I shall not love you less after our interview, it will then be as true as it is now, that I set a very high value upon your friendship, and count your kindness as one of the chief felicities of my life. Do not fancy that an intermission of writing is a decay of kindness. No man is always in a disposition to write; nor has any man at all times something to say.

'That distrust which intrudes so often on your mind is a mode of melancholy, which, if it be the business of a wise man to be happy, it is foolish to indulge; and if it be a duty

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started when we were in the Isle of Skye, for he thus writes to Mrs. Thrale (*Letters*, vol. i. p. 366):

'*Ashbourne, Sept.* 13, 1777.

'Boswell, I believe, is coming. He talks of being here to-day; I shall be glad to see him; but he shrinks from the Baltic expedition, which I think is the best scheme in our power; what we shall substitute I know not. He wants to see Wales, but except the woods of *Backycraigh*, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance, or quench the thirst of curiosity? We may, perhaps, form some scheme or other; but in the phrase of *Hockley in the Hole*, it is pity he has not a *better bottom*.'

Such an ardour of mind and vigour of enterprise is admirable at any age; but more particularly so at the advanced period at which Johnson was then arrived. I am sorry now that I did not insist on our executing that scheme. Besides the other objects of curiosity and observation, to have seen my illustrious friend received, as he probably would have been, by a prince so eminently distinguished for his variety of talents and acquisitions as the late King of Sweden, and by the Empress of Russia, whose extraordinary abilities, information, and magnanimity, astonish the world, would have afforded a noble subject for contemplation and record. This reflection may possibly be thought too visionary by the more sedate and cold-blooded part of my readers; yet I own I frequently indulge it with an earnest unavailing regret.

[1] It so happened. The letter was forwarded to my house at Edinburgh.

to preserve our faculties entire for their proper use, it is criminal. Suspicion is very often an useless pain. From that, and all other pains, I wish you free and safe; for I am, dear sir, most affectionately yours, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Ashbourne, Sept.* 11, 1777.'

On Sunday evening, Sept. 14, I arrived at Ashbourne, and drove directly up to Dr. Taylor's door. Dr. Johnson and he appeared before I had got out of the post-chaise, and welcomed me cordially.

I told them that I had travelled all the preceding night, and gone to bed at Leek in Staffordshire; and that when I rose to go to church in the afternoon, I was informed there had been an earthquake, of which, it seems, the shock had been felt in some degree at Ashbourne. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it will be much exaggerated in popular talk: for, in the first place, the common people do not accurately adapt their thoughts to the objects; nor, secondly, do they accurately adapt their words to their thoughts: they do not mean to lie; but, taking no pains to be exact, they give you very false accounts. A great part of their language is proverbial. If anything rocks at all, they say *it rocks like a cradle*; and in this way they go on.'

The subject of grief for the loss of relations and friends being introduced, I observed that it was strange to consider how soon it in general wears away. Dr. Taylor mentioned a gentleman of the neighbourhood as the only instance he had ever known of a person who had endeavoured to *retain* grief. He told Dr. Taylor that, after his lady's death, which affected him deeply, he resolved that the grief, which he cherished with a kind of sacred fondness, should be lasting; but that he found he could not keep it long. JOHNSON:

'All grief for what cannot in the course of nature be helped soon wears away; in some sooner, indeed, in some later; but it never continues very long, unless where there is madness, such as will make a man have pride so fixed in his mind, as to imagine himself a king; or any other passion in an unreasonable way: for all unnecessary grief is unwise, and therefore will not long be retained by a sound mind. If, indeed, the cause of our grief is occasioned by our own misconduct, if grief is mingled with remorse of conscience it should be lasting.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, we do not approve of a man who very soon forgets the loss of a wife or a friend.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, we disapprove of him, not because he soon forgets his grief; for the sooner it is forgotten the better, but because we suppose that, if he forgets his wife or his friend soon, he has not had much affection for them.'

I was somewhat disappointed in finding that the edition of the *English Poets*, for which he was to write Prefaces and Lives, was not an undertaking directed by him; but that he was to furnish a Preface and Life to any poet the booksellers pleased. I asked him if he would do this to any dunce's works, if they asked him. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; and *say* he was a dunce.' My friend seemed now not much to relish talking of this edition.

On Monday, September 15, Dr. Johnson observed that everybody commended such parts of his *Journey to the Western Islands* as were in their own way. 'For instance (said he), Mr. Jackson (the all-knowing) told me there was more good sense upon trade in it, than he should hear in the House of Commons in a year, except from Burke. Jones commended the part

which treats of language; Burke that which describes the inhabitants of mountainous countries.'

After breakfast Johnson carried me to see the garden belonging to the school of Ashbourne, which is very prettily formed on a bank rising gradually behind the house. The Reverend Mr. Langley, the headmaster, accompanied us.

While we sat basking in the sun upon a seat here, I introduced a common subject of complaint, the very small salaries which many curates have, and I maintained that no man should be invested with the character of a clergyman, unless he has a security for such an income as will enable him to appear respectable; that, therefore, a clergyman should not be allowed to have a curate, unless he gives him a hundred pounds a year; if he cannot do that, let him perform the duty himself.' JOHNSON: 'To be sure, sir, it is wrong that any clergyman should be without a reasonable income; but as the church revenues were sadly diminished at the Reformation, the clergy who have livings cannot afford, in many instances, to give good salaries to curates, without leaving themselves too little; and if no curate were to be permitted unless he had a hundred pounds a year, their number would be very small, which would be a disadvantage, as then there would not be such choice in the nursery for the church, curates being candidates for the higher ecclesiastical offices, according to their merit and good behaviour.' He explained the system of the English hierarchy exceedingly well. 'It is not thought fit (said he) to trust a man with the care of a parish till he has given proof as a curate that he shall deserve such a trust.' This is an excellent *theory*: and if the

practice were according to it, the Church of England would be admirable indeed. However, as I have heard Dr. Johnson observe as to the universities, bad practice does not infer that the *constitution* is bad.

We had with us at dinner several of Dr. Taylor's neighbours, good civil gentlemen, who seemed to understand Dr. Johnson very well, and not to consider him in the light that a certain person did, who being struck, or rather stunned, by his voice and manner, when he was afterwards asked what he thought of him, answered, 'He's a tremendous companion.'

Johnson told me that 'Taylor was a very sensible, acute man, and had a strong mind; that he had great activity in some respects, and yet such a sort of indolence, that if you should put a pebble upon his chimney-piece you would find it there, in the same state, a year afterwards.'

And here is a proper place to give an account of Johnson's humane and zealous interference in behalf of the Reverend Dr. William Dodd, formerly Prebendary of Brecon, and chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty; celebrated as a very popular preacher, an encourager of charitable institutions, and author of a variety of works, chiefly theological. Having unhappily contracted expensive habits of living, partly occasioned by licentiousness of manners, he, in an evil hour, when pressed by want of money, and dreading an exposure of his circumstances, forged a bond of which he attempted to avail himself to support his credit, flattering himself with hopes that he might be able to repay its amount without being detected. The person,

whose name he thus rashly and criminally presumed to falsify was the Earl of Chesterfield, to whom he had been tutor, and who he, perhaps, in the warmth of his feelings, flattered himself would have generously paid the money in case of an alarm being taken, rather than suffer him to fall a victim to the dreadful consequences of violating the law against forgery, the most dangerous crime in a commercial country; but the unfortunate divine had the mortification to find that he was mistaken. His noble pupil appeared against him, and he was capitally convicted.

Johnson told me that Dr. Dodd was very little acquainted with him, having been but once in his company, many years previous to this period (which was precisely the state of my own acquaintance with Dodd); but in his distress he bethought himself of Johnson's persuasive power of writing, if haply it might avail to obtain for him the royal mercy. He did not apply to him directly, but extraordinary as it may seem, through the late Countess of Harrington,[1] who wrote a letter to Johnson, asking him to employ his pen in favour of Dodd. Mr. Allen, the printer, who was Johnson's landlord and next neighbour in Bolt Court, and for whom he had much kindness, was one of Dodd's friends, of whom, to the credit of humanity be it recorded, that he had many who did not desert him, even after his infringement of the law had reduced him to the state of a man under sentence of death. Mr. Allen told me that he carried Lady Harrington's letter to Johnson, that Johnson read it walking up and down his chamber, and seemed much

[1] [Caroline, eldest daughter of Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, and wife of William, the second Earl of Harrington.—M.]

agitated, after which he said, 'I will do what I can'; and certainly he did make extraordinary exertions.

He this evening, as he had obligingly promised in one of his letters, put into my hands the whole series of his writings upon this melancholy occasion, and I shall present my readers with the abstract which I made from the collection; in doing which I studied to avoid copying what had appeared in print, and now make part of the edition of Johnson's *Works*, published by the booksellers of London, but taking care to mark Johnson's variations in some of the pieces there exhibited.

Dr. Johnson wrote, in the first place, Dr. Dodd's 'Speech to the Recorder of London,' at the Old Bailey, when sentence of death was about to be pronounced upon him.

He wrote also 'The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren,' a sermon delivered by Dr. Dodd, in the chapel of Newgate. According to Johnson's manuscript it began thus after the text, '*What shall I do to be saved?*':—'These were the words with which the keeper, to whose custody Paul and Silas were committed by their prosecutors, addressed his prisoners, when he saw them freed from their bonds by the perceptible agency of divine favour, and was, therefore, irresistibly convinced that they were not offenders against the laws, but martyrs to the truth.'

Dr. Johnson was so good as to mark for me with his own hand, on a copy of this sermon which is now in my possession, such passages as were added by Dr. Dodd. They are not many: whoever will take the trouble to look at the printed copy, and attend to what I mention, will be satisfied of this.

There is a short introduction by Dr. Dodd, and he also inserted this sentence: 'You see with what confusion and dishonour I now stand before you; no more in the pulpit of instruction, but on this humble seat with yourselves.' The *notes* are entirely Dodd's own, and Johnson's writing ends at the words, 'the thief whom He pardoned on the cross.' What follows was supplied by Dr. Dodd himself.

The other pieces mentioned by Johnson in the above-mentioned collection are, two letters, one to the Lord Chancellor Bathurst (not Lord North, as is erroneously supposed), and one to Lord Mansfield; A Petition from Dr. Dodd to the King; A Petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen; Observations of some length inserted in the newspapers, on occasion of Earl Percy's having presented to his Majesty a petition for mercy to Dodd, signed by twenty thousand people, but all in vain. He told me that he had also written a petition from the city of London; 'but (said he, with a significant smile) they *mended* it.'[1]

[1] Having unexpectedly, by the favour of Mr. Stone, of London Field, Hackney, seen the original in Johnson's handwriting of 'The Petition of the City of London to his Majesty, in favour of Dr. Dodd,' I now present it to my readers, with such passages as were omitted enclosed in crotchets, and the additions or variations marked in italics.

'That William Dodd, Doctor of Laws, now lying under sentence of death *in your Majesty's jail of Newgate*, for the crime of forgery, has for a great part of his life set a useful and laudable example of diligence in his calling [and as we have reason to believe, has exercised his ministry with great fidelity and efficacy], *which, in many instances, has produced the most happy effect.*

'That he has been the first institutor, [or] *and* a very earnest and active promoter of several modes of useful charity, and [that] therefore [he] may be considered as having been on many occasions a benefactor to the public.

'[That when they consider his past life, they are willing to suppose his late crime to have been, not the consequence of habitual depravity, but the suggestion of some sudden and violent temptation.]

'[That] *Your Petitioners* therefore considering his case, as in some of its circumstances unprecedented and peculiar, *and encouraged by your Majesty's known clemency*, [they] most humbly recommend the

The last of these articles which Johnson wrote is 'Dr. Dodd's last solemn Declaration,' which he left with the sheriff at the place of execution. Here also my friend marked the variations on a copy of that piece now in my possession. Dodd inserted, 'I never knew or attended to the calls of frugality, or the needful minuteness of painful economy'; and in the next sentence he introduced the words which I distinguish by *italics*: 'My life for some *few unhappy* years past has been *dreadfully erroneous.*' Johnson's expression was *hypocritical*; but his remark on the margin is, 'With this he said he could not charge himself.'

Having thus authentically settled what part of the *Occasional Papers*, concerning Dr. Dodd's miserable situation, came from the pen of Johnson, I shall proceed to present my readers with my record of the unpublished writings relating to that extraordinary and interesting matter.

I found a letter to Dr. Johnson from Dr. Dodd, May 23, 1777, in which 'The Convict's Address' seems clearly to be meant:

'I am so penetrated, my ever dear sir, with a sense of your extreme benevolence towards me, that I cannot find words equal to the sentiments of my heart. . . .

'You are too conversant in the world to need the slightest hint from me of what infinite utility the speech [1] on the awful day has been to me. I experience, every hour, some good effect from it. I am sure that effects still more salutary and important must follow from *your kind and intended favour.* I will labour—God being my helper—to do justice to it from

said William Dodd to [his] *your* Majesty's most gracious consideration, in hopes that he will be found not altogether [unfit] *unworthy* to stand an example of royal mercy.'

[1] His speech at the Old Bailey when found guilty.

the pulpit. I am sure, had I your sentiments constantly to deliver from thence, in all their mighty force and power, not a soul could be left unconvinced and unpersuaded.' . . .

He added:

'May God Almighty bless and reward, with his choicest comforts, your philanthropic actions, and enable me at all times to express what I feel of the high and uncommon obligation which I owe to the *first man* in our times.'

On Sunday, June 22, he writes, begging Dr. Johnson's assistance in framing a supplicatory letter to his Majesty:

'If his Majesty would be pleased of his royal clemency to spare me and my family the horrors and ignominy of a *public death*, which the *public* itself is solicitous to waive, and to grant me in some silent distant corner of the globe to pass the remainder of my days in penitence and prayer, I would bless his clemency and be humbled.'

This letter was brought to Dr. Johnson when in church. He stooped down and read it, and wrote, when he went home, the following letter for Dr. Dodd to the King:

'Sir,—May it not offend your Majesty that the most miserable of men applies himself to your clemency as his last hope and his last refuge; that your mercy is most earnestly and humbly implored by a clergyman whom your laws and judges have condemned to the horror and ignominy of a public execution.

'I confess the crime and own the enormity of its consequences, and the danger of its example. Nor have I the confidence to petition for impunity, but humbly hope that public security may be established without the spectacle of a clergyman dragged through the streets to a death of infamy, amidst the derision of the profligate and profane; and that justice may be satisfied with irrevocable exile, perpetual disgrace, and hopeless penury.

'My life, sir, has not been useless to mankind. I have benefited many. But my offences against God are numberless, and I have had little time for repentance. Preserve me, sir, by your prerogative of mercy from the necessity of appearing unprepared at that tribunal, before which kings and subjects must stand at last together. Permit me to hide my guilt in some obscure corner of a foreign country, where, if I can ever attain confidence to hope that my prayers will be heard, they shall be poured with all the fervour of gratitude for the life and happiness of your Majesty.—I am, sir, your Majesty's,' etc.

Subjoined to it was written as follows:

TO DR. DODD

'Sir,—I most seriously enjoin you not to let it be at all known that I have written this letter, and to return the copy to Mr. Allen in a cover to me. I hope I need not tell you that I wish it success; but do not indulge hope. Tell nobody.'

It happened luckily that Mr. Allen was pitched on to assist in this melancholy office, for he was a great friend of Mr. Akerman, the keeper of Newgate. Dr. Johnson never went to see Dr. Dodd. He said to me, 'It would have done *him* more harm than good to Dodd, who once expressed a desire to see him, but not earnestly.'

Dr. Johnson, on the 20th of June, wrote the following letter:

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES JENKINSON

'Sir,—Since the conviction and condemnation of Dr. Dodd, I have had, by the intervention of a friend, some intercourse with him, and I am sure I shall lose nothing in your opinion by tenderness and commiseration. Whatever be the crime, it is not easy to have any knowledge of the delinquent without a wish that his life may be spared, at least when no life has been taken away by him. I will, therefore, take the liberty

of suggesting some reasons for which I wish this unhappy being to escape the utmost rigour of his sentence.

'He is, so far as I can recollect, the first clergyman of our church who has suffered public execution for immorality; and I know not whether it would not be more for the interests of religion to bury such an offender in the obscurity of perpetual exile, than to expose him in a cart and on the gallows to all who for any reason are enemies to the clergy.

'The supreme power has, in all ages, paid some attention to the voice of the people; and that voice does not least deserve to be heard, when it calls out for mercy. There is now a very general desire that Dodd's life should be spared. More is not wished, and perhaps this is not too much to be granted.

'If you, sir, have any opportunity of enforcing these reasons, you may perhaps think them worthy of consideration: but whatever you determine, I most respectfully entreat that you will be pleased to pardon for this intrusion, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.'

It has been confidently circulated, with invidious remarks, that to this letter no attention whatever was paid by Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards Earl of Liverpool), and that he did not even deign to show the common civility of owning the receipt of it. I could not but wonder at such conduct in the noble Lord, whose own character and just elevation in life, I thought, must have impressed him with all due regard for great abilities and attainments. As the story had been much talked of, and apparently from good authority, I could not but have animadverted upon it in this work had it been as was alleged; but from my earnest love of truth, and having found reason to think that there might be a mistake, I presumed to write to his Lordship requesting an explanation; and it is with the sincerest pleasure that I am enabled to assure the world that there is no foundation for it, the fact being,

that owing to some neglect or accident Johnson's letter never came to Lord Hawkesbury's hands. I should have thought it strange indeed, if that noble Lord had undervalued my illustrious friend; but instead of this being the case, his Lordship, in the very polite answer with which he was pleased immediately to honour me, thus expresses himself: 'I have always respected the memory of Dr. Johnson, and admire his writings; and I frequently read many parts of them with pleasure and great improvement.'

All applications for the royal mercy having failed, Dr. Dodd prepared himself for death; and with a warmth of gratitude, wrote to Dr. Johnson as follows:

'*June* 25, *Midnight.*

'Accept, thou *great* and *good* heart, my earnest and fervent thanks and prayers for all thy benevolent and kind efforts in my behalf. Oh! Dr. Johnson! as I sought your knowledge at an early hour in life, would to heaven I had cultivated the love and acquaintance of so excellent a man! I pray God most sincerely to bless you with the highest transports—the infelt satisfaction of *humane* and benevolent exertions! And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss before you, I shall hail *your* arrival there with transports, and rejoice to acknowledge that you was my Comforter, my Advocate, and my *Friend*! God *be ever* with *you*!'

Dr. Johnson lastly wrote to Dr. Dodd this solemn and soothing letter:

TO THE REV. DR. DODD

'Dear Sir,—That which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes and the thoughts of men, are below the notice of an immortal being about to stand the trial for eternity, before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime,

morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and repairable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

'In requital of those well intended offices which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare. —I am, dear sir, your most affectionate servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*June* 26, 1777.'

Under the copy of this letter I found written, in Johnson's own hand, 'Next day, June 27, he was executed.'

To conclude this interesting episode with an useful application, let us now attend to the reflections of Johnson at the end of the 'Occasional Papers,' concerning the unfortunate Dr. Dodd:

'Such were the last thoughts of a man whom we have seen exulting in popularity, and sunk in shame. For his reputation, which no man can give to himself, those who conferred it are to answer. Of his public ministry the means of judging were sufficiently attainable. He must be allowed to preach well whose sermons strike his audience with forcible conviction. Of his life, those who thought it consistent with his doctrine, did not originally form false notions. He was at first what he endeavoured to make others; but the world broke down his resolution, and he in time ceased to exemplify his own instructions.

'Let those who are tempted to his faults tremble at his punishment; and those whom he impressed from the pulpit with religious sentiments, endeavour to confirm them by considering the regret and self-abhorrence with which he reviewed in prison his deviations from rectitude.'[1]

[1] [See Dr. Johnson's final opinion concerning Dr. Dodd, under April 18, 1783.—M.]

Johnson gave us this evening, in his happy, discriminative manner, a portrait of the late Mr. Fitzherbert of Derbyshire. 'There was (said he) no sparkle, no brilliancy in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. He made everybody quite easy, overpowered nobody by the superiority of his talents, made no man think worse of himself by being his rival, seemed always to listen, did not oblige you to hear much from him, and did not oppose what you said. Everybody liked him; but he had no friend, as I understand the word, nobody with whom he exchanged intimate thoughts. People were willing to think well of everything about him. A gentleman was making an affected rant, as many people do, of great feelings about "his dear son," who was at school near London; how anxious he was lest he might be ill, and what he would give to see him. "Can't you (said Fitzherbert) take a post-chaise and go to him?" This, to be sure, *finished* the affected man, but there was not much in it.[1] However this was circulated as wit for a whole winter, and, I believe, part of a summer too; a proof that he was no very witty man. He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by

[1] Dr. Gisborne, physician to his Majesty's household, has obligingly communicated to me a fuller account of this story than had reached Dr. Johnson. The affected gentleman was the late John Gilbert Cooper, Esq., author of a *Life of Socrates*, and of some poems in Dodsley's collection. Mr. Fitzherbert found him one morning, apparently, in such violent agitation, on account of the indisposition of his son, as to seem beyond the power of comfort. At length, however, he exclaimed, 'I'll write an elegy.' Mr. Fitzherbert being satisfied, by this, of the sincerity of his emotions, slily said, 'Had not you better take a post-chaise and go and see him?' It was the shrewdness of the insinuation which made the story be circulated.

never offending, than by giving a great deal of delight. In the first place, men hate more steadily than they love; and if I have said something to hurt a man once, I shall not get the better of this by saying many things to please him.'

Tuesday, September 16, Dr. Johnson having mentioned to me the extraordinary size and price of some cattle reared by Dr. Taylor, I rode out with our host, surveyed his farm, and was shown one cow which he had sold for a hundred and twenty guineas, and another for which he had been offered a hundred and thirty. Taylor thus described to me his old schoolfellow and friend, Johnson: 'He is a man of a very clear head, great power of words, and a very gay imagination; but there is no disputing with him. He will not hear you, and having a louder voice than you, must roar you down.'

In the afternoon I tried to get Dr. Johnson to like the Poems of Mr. Hamilton of Bangor, which I had brought with me: I had been much pleased with them at a very early age: the impression still remained on my mind; it was confirmed by the opinion of my friend, the Honourable Andrew Erskine, himself both a good poet and a good critic, who thought Hamilton as true a poet as ever wrote, and that his not having fame was unaccountable. Johnson, upon repeated occasions, while I was at Ashbourne, talked slightingly of Hamilton. He said there was no power of thinking in his verses, nothing that strikes one, nothing better than what you generally find in magazines; and that the highest praise they deserved was that they were very well for a gentleman to hand about among his friends. He said the imitation of *Ne sit ancillæ tibi*

amor, etc., was too solemn; he read part of it at the beginning. He read the beautiful pathetic song, 'Ah, the poor shepherd's mournful fate,' and did not seem to give attention to what I had been used to think tender, elegant strains, but laughed at the rhyme, in Scotch pronunciation, *wishes* and *blushes*, reading *wushus*—and there he stopped. He owned that the epitaph on Lord Newhall was pretty well done. He read the 'Inscription in a Summer-house,' and a little of the imitations of Horace's *Epistles*; but said he found nothing to make him desire to read on. When I urged that there were some good poetical passages in the book, 'Where (said he) will you find so large a collection without some?' I thought the description of Winter might obtain his approbation:

> 'See Winter, from the frozen north,
> Drives his iron chariot forth!
> His grisly hand in icy chains
> Fair Tweeda's silver flood constrains,' etc.

He asked why an '*iron* chariot?' and said 'icy chains' was an old image. I was struck with the uncertainty of taste, and somewhat sorry that a poet whom I had long read with fondness, was not approved by Dr. Johnson. I comforted myself with thinking that the beauties were too delicate for his robust perceptions. Garrick maintained that he had not a taste for the finest productions of genius: but I was sensible, that when he took the trouble to analyse critically, he generally convinced us that he was right.

In the evening the Reverend Mr. Seward of Lichfield, who was passing through Ashbourne on his way home, drank tea with us. Johnson described him

thus: 'Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker; so he goes to Buxton, and such places, where he may find companies to listen to him. And, sir, he is a valetudinarian, one of those who are always mending themselves. I do not know a more disagreeable character than a valetudinarian, who thinks he may do anything that is for his ease, and indulges himself in the grossest freedoms: sir, he brings himself to the state of a hog in a stye.'

Dr. Taylor's nose happening to bleed, he said, it was because he had omitted to have himself blooded four days after a quarter of a year's interval. Dr. Johnson, who was a great dabbler in physic, disapproved much of periodical bleeding. 'For (said he) you accustom yourself to an evacuation which Nature cannot perform of herself, and therefore she cannot help you, should you from forgetfulness or any other cause omit it; so you may be suddenly suffocated. You may accustom yourself to other periodical evacuations, because should you omit them, Nature can supply the omission; but Nature cannot open a vein to blood you.' 'I do not like to take an emetic (said Taylor), for fear of breaking some small vessels.' 'Poh! (said Johnson), if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't. You will break no small vessels!' (blowing with high derision).

I mentioned to Dr. Johnson that David Hume's persisting in his infidelity, when he was dying, shocked me much. JOHNSON: 'Why should it shock you, sir? Hume owned he had never read the New Testament with attention. Here then was a man who had been at no pains to inquire into the truth of

religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death would alter his way of thinking, unless God should send an angel to set him right.' I said I had reason to believe that the thought of annihilation gave Hume no pain. JOHNSON: 'It was not so, sir. He had a vanity in being thought easy. It is more probable that he should assume an appearance of ease, than so very improbable a thing should be, as a man not afraid of going (as, in spite of his delusive theory, he cannot be sure but he may go) into an unknown state, and not being uneasy at leaving all he knew. And you are to consider, that upon his own principle of annihilation he had no motive to speak the truth.' The horror of death which I had always observed in Dr. Johnson, appeared strong to-night. I ventured to tell him that I had been, for moments in my life, not afraid of death: therefore I could suppose another man in that state of mind for a considerable space of time. He said 'he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him.' He added, that it had been observed, that scarce any man dies in public, but with apparent resolution; from that desire of praise which never quits us. I said, Dr. Dodd seemed to be willing to die, and full of hopes of happiness. 'Sir (said he), Dr. Dodd would have given both his hands and both his legs to have lived. The better a man is, the more afraid is he of death, having a clearer view of infinite purity.' He owned that our being in an unhappy uncertainty as to our salvation was mysterious, and said, 'Ah! we must wait till we are in another state of being, to have many things explained to us.' Even the powerful

mind of Johnson seemed foiled by futurity. But I thought that the gloom of uncertainty in solemn religious speculation, being mingled with hope, was yet more consolatory than the emptiness of infidelity. A man can live in thick air, but perishes in an exhausted receiver.

Dr. Johnson was much pleased with a remark which I told him was made to me by General Paoli: 'That it is impossible not to be afraid of death; and that those who at the time of dying are not afraid, are not thinking of death, but of applause, or something else, which keeps death out of their sight: so that all men are equally afraid of death when they see it; only some have a power of turning their sight away from it better than others.'

On Wednesday, September 17, Dr. Butter, physician at Derby, drank tea with us; and it was settled that Dr. Johnson and I should go on Friday and dine with him. Johnson said, 'I'm glad of this.' He seemed weary of the uniformity of life at Dr. Taylor's.

Talking of biography, I said, in writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character. JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely; for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth.' Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for when Lord Hailes and he sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh, I well remember that Dr. Johnson main-

tained, that 'If a man is to write a *Panegyric*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write a *Life*, he must represent it really as it was': and when I objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, that 'it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it.' And in the Hebrides he maintained, as appears from my *Journal*,[1] that a man's intimate friend should mention his faults, if he writes his life.

He had this evening, partly, I suppose, from the spirit of contradiction to his Whig friend, a violent argument with Dr. Taylor, as to the inclinations of the people of England at this time towards the Royal Family of Stuart. He grew so outrageous as to say, 'that if England were fairly polled, the present King would be sent away to-night, and his adherents hanged to-morrow. Taylor, who was as violent a Whig as Johnson was a Tory, was roused by this to a pitch of bellowing. He denied, loudly, what Johnson said; and maintained that there was an abhorrence against the Stuart family, though he admitted that the people were not much attached to the present King.[1] JOHNSON: 'Sir, the state of the country is this: the people knowing it to be agreed on all hands that this King has not the hereditary right to the crown, and there being no hope that he who has it can be restored, have grown cold and indifferent upon the subject of

1 *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit., p. 240.

2 Dr. Taylor was very ready to make this admission, because the party with which he was connected was not in power. There was then some truth in it, owing to the pertinacity of factious clamour. Had he lived till now, it would have been impossible for him to deny that his Majesty possesses the warmest affection of his people.

loyalty, and have no warm attachment to any King. They would not, therefore, risk anything to restore the exiled family. They would not give 20s. apiece to bring it about. But if a mere vote could do it, there would be twenty to one; at least there would be a very great majority of voices for it. For, sir, you are to consider that all those who think a King has a right to his crown, as a man has to his estate, which is the just opinion, would be for restoring the King, who certainly has the hereditary right, could he be trusted with it; in which there would be no danger now, when laws and everything else are so much advanced: and every King will govern by the laws. And you must also consider, sir, that there is nothing on the other side to oppose this; for it is not alleged by any one that the present family has any inherent right: so that the Whigs could not have a contest between two rights.'

Dr. Taylor admitted, that if the question as to hereditary right were to be tried by a poll of the people of England, to be sure the abstract doctrine would be given in favour of the family of Stuart; but he said, the conduct of that family, which occasioned their expulsion, was so fresh in the minds of the people, that they would not vote for a restoration. Dr. Johnson, I think, was contented with the admission as to the hereditary right, leaving the original point in dispute, viz., what the people upon the whole would do, taking in right and affection; for he said, people were afraid of a change, even though they think it right. Dr. Taylor said something of the slight foundation of the hereditary right of the house of Stuart. 'Sir (said Johnson), the house of Stuart succeeded

to the full right of both the houses of York and Lancaster, whose common source had the undisputed right. A right to a throne is like a right to anything else. Possession is sufficient, where no better right can be shown. This was the case with the Royal Family of England, as it is now with the King of France: for as to the first beginning of the right we are in the dark.'

Thursday, September 18. Last night Dr. Johnson had proposed that the crystal lustre, or chandelier, in Dr. Taylor's large room, should be lighted up some time or other. Taylor said it should be lighted up next night. 'That will do very well (said I), for it is Dr. Johnson's birthday.' When we were in the Isle of Skye, Johnson had desired me not to mention his birthday. He did not seem pleased at this time that I mentioned it, and said (somewhat sternly), 'he would *not* have the lustre lighted next day.'

Some ladies, who had been present yesterday when I mentioned his birthday, came to dinner to-day, and plagued him unintentionally by wishing him joy. I know not why he disliked having his birthday mentioned, unless it were that it reminded him of his approaching nearer to death, of which he had a constant dread.

I mentioned to him a friend of mine who was formerly gloomy from low spirits, and much distressed by the fear of death, but was now uniformly placid, and contemplated his dissolution without any perturbation. 'Sir (said Johnson), this is only a disordered imagination taking a different turn.'

We talked of a collection being made of all the English poets who had published a volume of poems.

Jos. T. Warton's poetry.

Johnson told me 'that a Mr. Coxeter,[1] whom he knew, had gone the greatest length towards this; having collected, I think, about five hundred volumes of poets whose works were little known; but that upon his death Tom Osborne bought them, and they were dispersed, which he thought a pity, as it was curious to see any series complete; and in every volume of poems something good may be found.'

He observed, that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. 'He puts (said he) a very common thing in a strange dress till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it.' BOSWELL: 'That is owing to his being so much versant in old English poetry.' JOHNSON: 'What is that to the purpose, sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his taking much drink, the matter is not mended. No, sir, —— has taken to an odd mode. For example; he 'd write thus:

> '"Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
> Wearing out life's evening grey."'

Grey evening is common enough: but *evening grey* he 'd think fine.—Stay; we 'll make out the stanza:—

> '"Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
> Wearing out life's evening grey:
> Smite thy bosom, sage, and tell,
> What is bliss? and which the way?"'

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1 Thomas Coxeter, Esq., who had also made a large collection of old plays, and from whose manuscript notes the Lives of the English Poets, by Shiels and Cibber, were principally compiled, as should have been mentioned in a former page. See pp. 39-40 of this volume. [Mr. Coxeter was bred at Trinity College, Oxford, and died in London, April 17, 1747, in his fifty-ninth year. A particular account of him may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1781, p. 173.—M.]

Boswell: 'But why smite his bosom, sir?' Johnson: 'Why, to show he was in earnest' (smiling). He at an after period added the following stanza:

'Thus I spoke; and speaking sigh'd;
—Scarce repress'd the starting tear;
When the smiling sage replied—
Come, my lad, and drink some beer.'[1]

I cannot help thinking the first stanza very good solemn poetry, as also the first three lines of the second. Its last line is an excellent burlesque surprise on gloomy sentimental inquirers. And, perhaps, the advice is as good as can be given to a low-spirited, dissatisfied being:—'Don't trouble your head with sickly thinking: take a cup, and be merry.'

Friday, September 19, after breakfast, Dr. Johnson and I set out in Dr. Taylor's chaise to go to Derby. The day was fine, and we resolved to go by Keddlestone, the seat of Lord Scarsdale, that I might see his Lordship's fine house. I was struck with the magnificence of the building; and the extensive park, with the finest verdure, covered with deer, and cattle, and sheep, delighted me. The number of old oaks, of an

[1] As some of my readers may be gratified by reading the progress of this little composition, I shall insert it from my notes. 'When Dr. Johnson and I were sitting *tête-à-tête* at the Mitre tavern, May 9, 1778, he said, "*Where* is bliss," would be better. He then added a ludicrous stanza, but would not repeat it lest I should take it down. It was somewhat as follows, the last line I am sure I remember:

'"While I thus cried,
seer,
The hoary replied,
Come, my lad, and drink some beer."'

'In spring, 1779, when in better humour, he made the second stanza as in the text. There was only one variation afterwards made on my suggestion, which was changing *hoary* in the third line to *smiling*, both to avoid a sameness with the epithet in the first line, and to describe the hermit in his pleasantry. He was then very well pleased that I should preserve it.'

immense size, filled me with a sort of respectful admiration; for one of them £60 was offered. The excellent smooth gravel roads; the large piece of water formed by his Lordship from some small brooks, with a handsome barge upon it; the venerable Gothic church, now the family chapel, just by the house; in short, the grand group of objects agitated and distended my mind in a most agreeable manner. 'One should think (said I) that the proprietor of all this *must* be happy.' 'Nay, sir (said Johnson), all this excludes but one evil—poverty.'[1]

Our names were sent up, and a well-dressed elderly housekeeper, a most distinct articulator, showed us the house; which I need not describe, as there is an account of it published in Adam's *Works in Architecture*. Dr. Johnson thought better of it to-day, than when he saw it before; for he had lately attacked it violently, saying, 'It would do excellently for a town-hall. The large room with the pillars (said he), would do for the judges to sit in at the assizes; the circular room for a jury-chamber; and the room above for prisoners.' Still he thought the large room ill-lighted, and of no use but for dancing in; and the bed-chambers but indifferent rooms; and that the immense sum which it cost was injudiciously laid out. Dr. Taylor had put him in mind of his *appearing* pleased with the house. 'But (said he) that was when

[1] When I mentioned Dr. Johnson's remark to a lady of admirable good sense and quickness of understanding, she observed, 'It is true, all this excludes only one evil; but how much good does it let in?' To this observation much praise has been justly given. Let me then now do myself the honour to mention that the lady who made it was the late Margaret Montgomerie, my very valuable wife, and the very affectionate mother of my children, who, if they inherit her good qualities, will have no reason to complain of their lot. *Dos magna parentum virtus.*

Lord Scarsdale was present. Politeness obliges us to appear pleased with a man's works when he is present. No man will be so ill-bred as to question you. You may therefore pay compliments without saying what is not true. I should say to Lord Scarsdale of his large room, "My Lord, this is the most *costly* room that I ever saw,"—which is true.'

Dr. Manningham, physician in London, who was visiting at Lord Scarsdale's, accompanied us through many of the rooms, and soon afterwards my Lord himself, to whom Dr. Johnson was known, appeared, and did the honours of the house. We talked of Mr. Langton. Johnson, with a warm vehemence of affectionate regard, exclaimed, 'The earth does not bear a worthier man than Bennet Langton.' We saw a good many fine pictures, which I think are described in one of Young's *Tours*. There is a printed catalogue of them, which the housekeeper put into my hand; I should like to view them at leisure. I was much struck with Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, by Rembrandt. We were shown a pretty large library. In his Lordship's dressing-room lay Johnson's small Dictionary; he showed it to me, with some eagerness, saying, 'Look ye! *Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.*' He observed, also, Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, and said, 'Here's our friend! The poor Doctor would have been happy to hear of this.'

In our way, Johnson strongly expressed his love of driving fast in a post-chaise. 'If (said he) I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand

me, and would add something to the conversation.' I observed, that we were this day to stop just where the Highland army did in 1745. JOHNSON: 'It was a noble attempt.' BOSWELL: 'I wish we could have an authentic history of it.' JOHNSON: 'If you were not an idle dog you might write it, by collecting from everybody what they can tell, and putting down your authorities.' BOSWELL: 'But I could not have the advantage of it in my lifetime.' JOHNSON: 'You might have the satisfaction of its fame, by printing it in Holland; and as to profit, consider how long it was before writing came to be considered in a pecuniary view. Baretti says, he is the first man that ever received copy-money in Italy.' I said that I would endeavour to do what Dr. Johnson suggested, and I thought that I might write so as to venture to publish my *History of the Civil War in Great Britain in* 1745 *and* 1746, without being obliged to go to a foreign press.[1]

When we arrived at Derby, Dr. Butter accompanied us to see the manufactory of china there. I admired the ingenuity and delicate art with which a man fashioned clay into a cup, a saucer, or a teapot, while a boy turned round a wheel to give the mass rotundity. I thought this as excellent in its species of power, as making good verses in its species. Yet I had no respect for this potter. Neither, indeed, has a man of any extent of thinking for a mere verse-maker, in whose numbers, however perfect, there is no poetry, no mind. The china was beautiful, but Dr. Johnson

[1] I am now happy to understand that Mr. John Home, who was himself gallantly in the field for the reigning family, in that interesting warfare, but is generous enough to do justice to the other side, is preparing an account of it for the press.

justly observed it was too dear; for that he could have vessels of silver, of the same size, as cheap as what were here made of porcelain.

I felt a pleasure in walking about Derby, such as I always have in walking about any town to which I am not accustomed. There is an immediate sensation of novelty; and one speculates on the way in which life is passed in it, which, although there is a sameness everywhere upon the whole, is yet minutely diversified. The minute diversities in everything are wonderful. Talking of shaving the other night at Dr. Taylor's, Dr. Johnson said, 'Sir, of a thousand shavers, two do not shave so much alike as not to be distinguished.' I thought this not possible, till he specified so many of the varieties in shaving;—holding the razor more or less perpendicular; drawing long or short strokes; beginning at the upper part of the face, or the under; at the right side or the left side. Indeed, when one considers what variety of sounds can be uttered by the windpipe, in the compass of a very small aperture, we may be convinced how many degrees of difference there may be in the application of a razor.

We dined with Dr. Butter,[1] whose lady is daughter of my cousin, Sir John Douglas, whose grandson is now presumptive heir of the noble family of Queensberry. Johnson and he had a good deal of medical conversation. Johnson said, he had somewhere or other given an account of Dr. Nichols' discourse '*De Anima Medica.*' He told us, 'that whatever a man's distemper was, Dr. Nichols would not attend

[1] [Dr. Butter was at this time a practising physician at Derby. He afterwards removed to London, where he died in his seventy-ninth year, March 22, 1850. He is author of several medical tracts.—M.]

him as a physician, if his mind was not at ease; for he believed that no medicines would have any influence. He once attended a man in trade, upon whom he found none of the medicines he prescribed had any effect; he asked the man's wife privately whether his affairs were not in a bad way? She said no. He continued his attendance some time, still without success. At length the man's wife told him, she had discovered that her husband's affairs *were* in a bad way. When Goldsmith was dying, Dr. Turton said to him, "Your pulse is in greater disorder than it should be, from the degree of fever which you have: is your mind at ease?" Goldsmith answered it was not.'

After dinner, Mrs. Butter went with me to see the silk-mill which Mr. John Lombe had[1] had a patent for, having brought away the contrivance from Italy. I am not very conversant with mechanics; but the simplicity of this machine, and its multiplied operations, struck me with an agreeable surprise. I had learned from Dr. Johnson, during this interview, not to think with a dejected indifference of the works of art, and the pleasures of life, because life is uncertain and short; but to consider such indifference as a failure of reason, a morbidness of mind; for happiness should be cultivated as much as we can, and the objects which are instrumental to it should be steadily considered as of importance, with a reference not only to ourselves, but to multitudes in successive ages. Though it is proper to value small parts, as

'Sands make the mountain, moments make the year';[2]

[1] *See* Hutton's *History of Derby*, a book which is deservedly esteemed for its information, accuracy, and good narrative. Indeed the age in which we live is eminently distinguished by topographical excellence.

[2] Young.

yet we must contemplate, collectively, to have a just estimation of objects. One moment's being uneasy or not, seems of no consequence; yet this may be thought of the next, and the next, and so on, till there is a large portion of misery. In the same way one must think of happiness, of learning, of friendship. We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so, in a series of kindnesses, there is at last one which makes the heart run over. We must not divide objects of our attention into minute parts, and think separately of each part. It is by contemplating a large mass of human existence that a man, while he sets a just value on his own life, does not think of his death as annihilating all that is great and pleasing in the world, as if actually *contained in his mind*, according to Berkeley's reverie. If his imagination be not sickly and feeble, it 'wings its distant way' far beyond himself, and views the world in unceasing activity of every sort. It must be acknowledged, however, that Pope's plaintive reflection, that all things would be as gay as ever, on the day of his death, is natural and common. We are apt to transfer to all around us our own gloom, without considering that at any given point of time there is, perhaps, as much youth and gaiety in the world as at another. Before I came into this life, in which I have had so many pleasant scenes, have not thousands and ten thousands of deaths and funerals happened, and have not families been in grief for their nearest relations? But have those dismal circumstances at all affected *me*? Why, then, should the gloomy scenes which I experience, or which I know,

affect others? Let us guard against imagining that there is an end of felicity upon earth, when we ourselves grow old, or are unhappy.

Dr. Johnson told us at tea, that when some of Dr. Dodd's pious friends were trying to console him by saying that he was going to leave 'a wretched world,' he had honesty enough not to join in the cant: 'No, no (said he), it has been a very agreeable world to me.' Johnson added, 'I respect Dodd for thus speaking the truth; for, to be sure, he had for several years enjoyed a life of great voluptuousness.'

He told us that Dodd's city friends stood by him so, that a thousand pounds were ready to be given to the jailer, if he would let him escape. He added, that he knew a friend of Dodd's who walked about Newgate for some time on the evening before the day of his execution with five hundred pounds in his pocket, ready to be paid to any of the turnkeys who could get him out: but it was too late; for he was watched with much circumspection. He said Dodd's friends had an image of him made of wax, which was to have been left in his place, and he believed it was carried into the prison.

Johnson disapproved of Dr. Dodd's leaving the world persuaded that 'The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren' was of his own writing. 'But, sir (said I), you contributed to the deception; for when Mr. Seward expressed a doubt to you that it was not Dodd's own, because it had a great deal more force of mind in it than anything known to be his, you answered: 'Why should you think so? Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, as Dodd got it from me to pass as his own, while that could do him any good, that was an *implied promise* that I should not own it. To own it, therefore, would have been telling a lie, with the addition of breach of promise, which was worse than simply telling a lie to make it be believed it was Dodd's. Besides, sir, I did not *directly* tell a lie: I left the matter uncertain. Perhaps I thought that Seward would not believe it the less to be mine for what I said; but I would not put it in his power to say I had owned it.'

He praised Blair's sermons: 'Yet,' said he (willing to let us see he was aware that fashionable fame, however deserved, is not always the most lasting), 'perhaps they may not be reprinted after seven years; at least not after Blair's death.'

He said, 'Goldsmith was a plant that flowered late. There appeared nothing remarkable about him when he was young, though when he had got high in fame, one of his friends began to recollect something of his being distinguished at college. Goldsmith in the same manner recollected more of that friend's early years as he grew a greater man.'

I mentioned that Lord Monboddo told me he awaked every morning at four, and then for his health got up and walked in his room naked, with the window open, which he called taking *an air bath*, after which he went to bed again, and slept two hours more. Johnson, who was always ready to beat down anything that seemed to be exhibited with disproportionate importance, thus observed: 'I suppose, sir, there is no more in it than this, he wakes at four and cannot sleep till he chills himself, and makes the warmth of the bed a grateful sensation.'

I talked of the difficulty of rising in the morning. Dr. Johnson told me 'that the learned Mrs. Carter, at that period when she was eager in study, did not awake as early as she wished, and she therefore had a contrivance that, at a certain hour, her chamber-light should burn a string to which a heavy weight was suspended, which then fell with a strong sudden noise: this roused her from her sleep, and then she had no difficulty in getting up.' But I said *that* was my difficulty, and wished there could be some medicine invented which would make one rise without pain, which I never did, unless after lying in bed a very long time. Perhaps there may be something in the stores of Nature which could do this. I have thought of a pulley to raise me gradually, but that would give me pain, as it would counteract my internal inclination. I would have something that can dissipate the *vis inertiæ*, and give elasticity to the muscles. As I imagine that the human body may be put, by the operation of other substances, into any state in which it has ever been; and as I have experienced a state in which rising from bed was not disagreeable, but easy, nay, sometimes agreeable, I suppose that this state may be produced, if we knew by what. We can heat the body, we can cool it; we can give it tension or relaxation; and surely it is possible to bring it into a state in which rising from bed will not be a pain.

Johnson observed that 'a man should take a sufficient quantity of sleep, which Dr. Mead says is between seven and nine hours.' I told him that Dr. Cullen said to me that a man should not take more sleep than he can take at once. JOHNSON: 'This rule, sir, cannot hold in all cases; for many people

have their sleep broken by sickness; and surely Cullen would not have a man to get up, after having slept but an hour. Such a regimen would soon end in a *long sleep*.'[1] Dr. Taylor remarked, I think very justly, that 'a man who does not feel an inclination to sleep at the ordinary times, instead of being stronger than other people, must not be well; for a man in health has all the natural inclination to eat, drink, and sleep in a strong degree.'

Johnson advised me to-night not to *refine* in the education of my children. 'Life (said he) will not bear refinement; you must do as other people do.'

As we drove back to Ashbourne, Dr. Johnson recommended to me, as he had often done, to drink water only: 'For (said he) you are then sure not to get drunk; whereas, if you drink wine, you are never sure.' I said drinking wine was a pleasure which I was unwilling to give up. 'Why, sir (said he), there is no doubt that not to drink wine is a great deduction from life; but it may be necessary.' He however owned, that in his opinion a free use of wine did not shorten life; and said, he would not give less for the life of a certain Scotch lord (whom he named) celebrated for hard drinking, than for that of a sober

[1] This regimen was, however, practised by Bishop Ken, of whom Hawkins (*not Sir John*) in his life of that venerable prelate, p. 4, tells us, 'And that neither his study might be the aggressor on his hours of instruction, or what he judged his duty, prevent his improvements; or both, his closet addresses to his God; he strictly accustomed himself to but one sleep, which often obliged him to rise at one or two of the clock in the morning, and sometimes sooner; and grew so habitual that it continued with him almost till his last illness. And so lively and cheerful was his temper that he would be very facetious and entertaining to his friends in the evening, even when it was perceived that with difficulty he kept his eyes open; and then seemed to go to rest with no other purpose than the refreshing and enabling him with more vigour and cheerfulness to sing his morning hymn, as he then used to do to his lute before he put on his clothes.

man. 'But stay (said he, with his usual intelligence, and accuracy of inquiry), does it take much wine to make him drunk?' I answered, 'A great deal either of wine or strong punch.' 'Then (said he) that is the worse.' I presume to illustrate my friend's observation thus: 'A fortress which soon surrenders has its walls less shattered, than when a long and obstinate resistance is made.'

I ventured to mention a person who was as violent a Scotsman as he was an Englishman; and literally had the same contempt for an Englishman compared with a Scotsman, that he had for a Scotsman compared with an Englishman; and that he would say of Dr. Johnson, 'Damned rascal! to talk as he does of the Scotch.' This seemed, for a moment, 'to give him pause.' It, perhaps, presented his extreme prejudice against the Scotch in a point of view somewhat new to him, by the effect of *contrast*.

By the time when we returned to Ashbourne, Dr. Taylor was gone to bed. Johnson and I sat up a long time by ourselves.

He was much diverted with an article which I showed him in the *Critical Review* of this year, giving an account of a curious publication, entitled, *A Spiritual Diary and Soliloquies*, by John Rutty, M.D. Dr. Rutty was one of the people called Quakers, a physician of some eminence in Dublin, and author of several works. This diary, which was kept from 1753 to 1775, the year in which he died, and was now published in two volumes octavo, exhibited in the simplicity of his heart a minute and honest register of the state of his mind; which, though frequently laughable enough, was not more so than the history

of many men would be, if recorded with equal fairness.

The following specimens were extracted by the reviewers:

'Tenth month, 1753.

'23. Indulgence in bed an hour too long.

'Twelfth month, 17. An hypochrondriac obnubilation from wind and indigestion.

'Ninth month, 28. An overdose of whisky.

'29. A dull, cross, choleric day.

'First month, 1757—22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.

'31. Dogged on provocation.

'Second month, 5. Very dogged or snappish.

'14. Snappish on fasting.

'26. Cursed snappishness to those under me, on a bodily indisposition.

'Third month, 11. On a provocation, exercised a dumb resentment for two days, instead of scolding.

'22. Scolded too vehemently.

'23. Dogged again.

'Fourth month, 29. Mechanically and sinfully dogged.'

Johnson laughed heartily at this good Quietist's self-condemning minutes; particularly at his mentioning, with such a serious regret, occasional instances of '*swinishness* in eating, and *doggedness of temper*.' He thought the observations of the *Critical Reviewers* upon the importance of a man to himself so ingenious, and so well expressed, that I shall here introduce them.

After observing, that 'there are few writers who have gained any reputation by recording their own actions,' they say:

'We may reduce the egotists to four classes. In the *first* we have Julius Cæsar: he relates his own transactions; but

he relates them with peculiar grace and dignity, and his narrative is supported by the greatness of his character and achievements. In the *second* class we have Marcus Antoninus: this writer has given us a series of reflections on his own life; but his sentiments are so noble, his morality so sublime, that his meditations are universally admired. In the *third* class we have some others of tolerable credit, who have given importance to their own private history by an intermixture of literary anecdotes, and the occurrences of their own times: the celebrated *Huetius* has published an entertaining volume upon this plan, *De rebus ad eum pertinentibus.* In the *fourth* class we have the journalists, temporal and spiritual: Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and a thousand other old women and fanatic writers of memoirs and meditations.'

I mentioned to him that Dr. Hugh Blair, in his lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, which I heard him deliver at Edinburgh, had animadverted on the Johnsonian style as too pompous; and attempted to imitate it, by giving a sentence of Addison in the *Spectator*, No. 411, in the manner of Johnson. When treating of the utility of the pleasures of imagination in preserving us from vice, it is observed of those 'who know not how to be idle and innocent,' that 'their very first step out of business is into vice or folly'; which Dr. Blair supposed would have been expressed in the *Rambler*, thus: 'their very first step out of the regions of business is into the perturbation of vice, or the vacuity of folly.'[1] JOHNSON: 'Sir, these are not the words I

[1] When Dr. Blair published his *Lectures*, he was invidiously attacked for having omitted his censure on Johnson's style, and, on the contrary, praising it highly. But before that time Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* had appeared, in which his style was considerably easier than when he wrote the *Rambler*. It would, therefore, have been uncandid in Blair, even supposing his criticism to have been just, to have preserved it.

should have used. No, sir; the imitators of my style have not hit it. Miss Aikin has done it the best; for she has imitated the sentiment as well as the diction.'

I intend before this work is concluded, to exhibit specimens of imitation of my friend's style in various modes; some caricaturing or mimicking it, and some formed upon it, whether intentionally or with a degree of similarity to it, of which, perhaps, the writers were not conscious.

In Baretti's Review, which he published in Italy, under the title of *Frusta Letteraria*, it is observed, that Dr. Robertson the historian had formed his style upon that of '*Il celebre Samuele Johnson.*' My friend himself was of that opinion; for he once said to me, in a pleasant humour: 'Sir, if Robertson's style be faulty, he owes it to me; that is, having too many words, and those too big ones.'

I read to him a letter which Lord Monboddo had written to me, containing some critical remarks upon the style of his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.* His Lordship praised the very fine passage upon landing at Icolmkill;[1] but his own style being

[1] 'We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy, as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.'

Had our tour produced nothing else but this sublime passage, the world must have acknowledged that it was not made in vain. Sir

exceedingly dry and hard, he disapproved of the richness of Johnson's language, and of his frequent use of metaphorical expressions. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, this criticism would be just if, in my style, superfluous words, or words too big for the thoughts, could be pointed out; but this I do not believe can be done. For instance, in the passage which Lord Monboddo admires, "We were now treading that illustrious region," the word *illustrious* contributes nothing to the mere narration; for the fact might be told without it; but it is not, therefore, superfluous; for it wakes the mind to peculiar attention, where something of more than usual importance is to be presented. "Illustrious!"—for what? and then the sentence proceeds to expand the circumstances connected with Iona. And, sir, as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style, when it is used with propriety, for it gives you two ideas for one;—conveys the meaning more luminously, and generally with a perception of delight.'

He told me that he had been asked to undertake the new edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, but had declined it; which he afterwards said to me he regretted. In this regret many will join, because it would have procured us more of Johnson's most delightful species of writing; and although my friend Dr. Kippis[1] has hitherto discharged the task judici-

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Joseph Banks, the present respectable President of the Royal Society, told me, he was so much struck on reading it, that he clasped his hands together, and remained for some time in an attitude of silent admiration.

[1] [After having given to the public the first five volumes of a new edition of *Biographia Britannica*, between the years 1778 and 1793, Dr. Kippis died, October 8, 1795; and the work is not likely to be soon completed.—M.]

ously, distinctly, and with more impartiality than might have been expected from a Separatist, it were to have been wished that the superintendence of this literary Temple of Fame had been assigned to 'a friend of the constitution in Church and State.' We should not then have had it too much crowded with obscure dissenting teachers, doubtless men of merit and worth, but not quite to be numbered amongst 'the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland.'[1]

On Saturday, September 20, after breakfast, when Taylor was gone out to his farm, Dr. Johnson and I

[1] In this censure, which has been carelessly uttered, I carelessly joined. But in justice to Dr. Kippis, who, with that manly, candid good temper which marks his character, set me right, I now with pleasure retract it: and I desire it may be particularly observed, as pointed out by him to me, that 'The new lives of dissenting divines, in the first four volumes of the second edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, are those of John Abernethy; Thomas Amory; George Benson; Hugh Broughton, the learned Puritan; Simon Browne; Joseph Boyse of Dublin; Thomas Cartwright, the learned Puritan; and Samuel Chandler. The only doubt I have ever heard suggested is, whether there should have been an article of Dr. Amory. But I was convinced, and am still convinced, that he was entitled to one, from the reality of his learning, and the excellent and candid nature of his practical writings.

'The new lives of clergymen of the Church of England, in the same four volumes, are as follows: John Balguy; Edward Bentham; George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne; William Berriman; Thomas Birch; William Borlase; Thomas Bott; James Bradley; Thomas Broughton; John Brown; John Burton; Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham; Thomas Carte; Edmund Castell; Edmund Chishull; Charles Churchilll; William Clarke; Robert Clayton, Bishop of Clogher; John Conybeare, Bishop of Bristol; George Costard; and Samuel Croxall. —"I am not conscious (says Kippis) of any partiality in conducting the work. I would not willingly insert a dissenting minister that does not justly deserve to be noticed, or omit an established clergyman that does. At the same time, I shall not be deterred from introducing dissenters into the *Biographia*, when I am satisfied that they are entitled to that distinction, from their writings, learning, and merit."'

Let me add that the expression 'A friend to the constitution in Church and State,' was not meant by me as any reflection upon this reverend gentleman, as if he were an enemy to the political constitution of his country, as established at the Revolution, but, from my steady and avowed predilection for a *Tory*, was quoted from Johnson's *Dictionary*, where that distinction is so defined.

had a serious conversation, by ourselves, on melancholy and madness; which he was, I always thought, erroneously inclined to confound together. Melancholy, like 'great wit,' may be 'near allied to madness'; but there is, in my opinion, a distinct separation between them. When he talked of madness, he was to be understood as speaking of those who were in any great degree disturbed, or, as it is commonly expressed, 'troubled in mind.' Some of the ancient philosophers held, that all deviations from right reason were madness; and whoever wishes to see the opinions both of ancients and moderns upon this subject, collected and illustrated with a variety of curious facts, may read Dr. Arnold's very entertaining work.[1]

Johnson said, 'A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash; but of whom he stands in awe.' I was struck with the justness of this observation. To be with those of whom a person, whose mind is wavering and dejected, stands in awe, represses and composes an uneasy tumult of spirits,[2] and consoles him with the contemplation of something steady, and at least comparatively great.

He added, 'Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to soothe their minds, and divert their attention from the misery which they suffer: but when they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek for pain.[3] Employment, sir, and hardships, pre-

[1] *Observations on Insanity*, by Thomas Arnold, M.D., London, 1782.

[2] [Cardan composed his mind, tending to madness (or rather actually mad, for such he seems in his writings, learned as they are), by exciting voluntary pain. V. Card. *Op. et Vit.*—K.]

[3] We read in the Gospels, that those unfortunate persons who were possessed with evil spirits (which, after all, I think, is the most prob-

vent melancholy. I suppose in all our army in America there was not one man who went mad.'

We entered seriously upon a question of much importance to me, which Johnson was pleased to consider with friendly attention. I had long complained to him that I felt discontented in Scotland, as too narrow a sphere, and that I wished to make my chief residence in London, the great scene of ambition, instruction, and amusement: a scene, which was to me, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, I never knew any one who had such a *gust* for London as you have; and I cannot blame you for your wish to live there; yet, sir, were I in your father's place, I should not consent to your settling there; for I have the old feudal notions, and I should be afraid that Auchinleck would be deserted, as you would soon find it more desirable to have a country-seat in a better climate. I own, however, that to consider it as a *duty* to reside on a family estate is a prejudice; for we must consider that working-people get employment equally, and the produce of the land is sold equally, whether a great family resides at home or not; and if the rents of an estate be carried to London, they return again in the circulation of commerce; nay, sir, we must perhaps allow, that carrying the

able cause of madness, as was first suggested to me by my respectable friend Sir John Pringle), had recourse to pain, tearing themselves, and jumping sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water. Mr. Seward has furnished me with a remarkable anecdote in confirmation of Dr. Johnson's observation. A tradesman who had acquired a large fortune in London, retired from business, and went to live at Worcester. His mind, being without its usual occupation, and having nothing else to supply its place, preyed upon itself, so that existence was a torment to him. At last he was seized with the stone; and a friend who found him in one of its severest fits, having expressed his concern, 'No, no, sir (said he), don't pity me; what I now feel is ease, compared with that torture of mind from which it relieves me.'

rents to a distance is a good, because it contributes to that circulation. We must, however, allow, that a well-regulated great family may improve a neighbourhood in civility and elegance, and give an example of good order, virtue, and piety; and so its residence at home may be of much advantage. But if a great family be disorderly and vicious, its residence at home is very pernicious to a neighbourhood. There is not now the same inducement to live in the country as formerly; the pleasures of social life are much better enjoyed in town; and there is no longer in the country that power and influence in proprietors of land which they had in old times, and which made the country so agreeable to them. The Laird of Auchinleck now is not near so great a man as the Laird of Auchinleck was a hundred years ago.'

I told him that one of my ancestors never went from home without being attended by thirty men on horseback. Johnson's shrewdness and spirit of inquiry were exerted upon every occasion. 'Pray (said he), how did your ancestor support his thirty men and thirty horses when he went at a distance from home, in an age when there was hardly any money in circulation?' I suggested the same difficulty to a friend who mentioned Douglas's going to the Holy Land with a numerous train of followers. Douglas could, no doubt, maintain followers enough while living upon his own lands, the produce of which supplied them with food; but he could not carry that food to the Holy Land; and as there was no commerce by which he could be supplied with money, how could he maintain them in foreign countries?

I suggested a doubt, that if I were to reside in

London, the exquisite zest with which I relished it in occasional visits must go off, and I might grow tired of it. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.'

To obviate his apprehension, that by settling in London I might desert the seat of my ancestors, I assured him that I had old feudal principles to a degree of enthusiasm; and that I felt all the *dulcedo* of the *natale solum*. I reminded him that the Laird of Auchinleck had an elegant house, in front of which he could ride ten miles forward upon his own territories, upon which he had upwards of six hundred people attached to him; that the family seat was rich in natural romantic beauties of rock, wood, and water; and that in my 'morn of life' I had appropriated the finest descriptions in the ancient classics to certain scenes there, which were thus associated in my mind. That when all this was considered, I should certainly pass a part of the year at home, and enjoy it the more from variety, and from bringing with me a share of the intellectual stores of the metropolis. He listened to all this, and kindly 'hoped it might be as I now supposed.'

He said a country gentleman should bring his lady to visit London as soon as he can, that they may have agreeable topics of conversation when they are by themselves.

As I meditated trying my fortune in Westminster Hall, our conversation turned upon the profession of the law in England. JOHNSON: 'You must not indulge too sanguine hopes should you be called to

our bar. I was told by a very sensible lawyer that there are a great many chances against any man's success in the profession of the law; the candidates are so numerous, and those who get large practice so few. He said it was by no means true that a man of good parts and application is sure of having business, though he indeed allowed that if such a man could but appear in a few causes, his merit would be known, and he would get forward; but that the great risk was that a man might pass half a lifetime in the Courts, and never have an opportunity of showing his abilities.'[1]

We talked of employment being absolutely necessary to preserve the mind from wearing and growing fretful, especially in those who have a tendency to melancholy; and I mentioned to him a saying which somebody had related of an American savage, who, when a European was expatiating on all the advantages of money, put this question: 'Will it purchase *occupation*?' JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, this saying is too refined for a savage. And, sir, money *will* purchase occupation; it will purchase all the conveniences of life; it will purchase variety of company; it will purchase all sorts of entertainment.'

I talked to him of Forster's *Voyage to the South Seas*, which pleased me; but I found he did not like it. 'Sir (said he), there is a great affectation of fine

[1] Now, at the distance of fifteen years since this conversation passed, the observation which I have had an opportunity of making in Westminster Hall, has convinced me, that however true the opinion of Dr. Johnson's legal friend may have been some time ago, the same certainty of success cannot now be promised to the same display of merit. The reasons, however, of the rapid rise of some, and the disappointment of others equally respectable, are such as it might seem invidious to mention, and would require a longer detail than would be proper for this work.

writing in it.' BOSWELL: 'But he carries you along with him.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; he does not carry *me* along with him: he leaves me behind him; or rather, indeed, he sets me before him; for he makes me turn over many leaves at a time.'

On Sunday, September 12, we went to the church of Ashbourne, which is one of the largest and most luminous that I have seen in any town of the same size. I felt great satisfaction in considering that I was supported in my fondness for solemn public worship by the general concurrence and munificence of mankind.

Johnson and Taylor were so different from each other that I wondered at their preserving an intimacy. Their having been at school and college together, might, in some degree, account for this; but Sir Joshua Reynolds has furnished me with a stronger reason; for Johnson mentioned to him that he had been told by Taylor that he was to be his heir. I shall not take upon me to animadvert upon this; but certain it is that Johnson paid great attention to Taylor. He now, however, said to me, 'Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, 'his talk is of bullocks.'[1] I do not suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical: this he knows that I see; and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation.'

I have no doubt that a good many sermons were

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxxviii. 25. The whole chapter may be read as an admirable illustration of the superiority of cultivated minds over the gross and illiterate.

composed for Taylor by Johnson. At this time I found upon his table a part of one which he had newly begun to write: and *Concio pro Tayloro* appears in one of his diaries. When to these circumstances we add the internal evidence from the power of thinking and style in the collection which the Reverend Mr. Hayes had published, with the *significant* title of 'Sermons *left for publication* by the Reverend John Taylor, LL.D.,' our conviction will be complete.

I, however, would not have it thought, that Dr. Taylor, though he could not write like Johnson (as, indeed, who could?) did not sometimes compose sermons as good as those which we generally have from very respectable divines. He showed me one with notes on the margin in Johnson's handwriting; and I was present when he read another to Johnson, that he might have his opinion of it, and Johnson said it was 'very well.' These, we may be sure, were not Johnson's; for he was above little arts, or tricks of deception.

Johnson was by no means of opinion, that every man of a learned profession should consider it as incumbent upon him, or as necessary to his credit, to appear as an author. When, in the ardour of ambition for literary fame, I regretted to him one day that an eminent judge had nothing of it, and therefore would leave no perpetual monument of himself to posterity; 'Alas! sir (said Johnson), what a mass of confusion should we have, if every bishop, and every judge, every lawyer, physician, and divine, were to write books.'

I mentioned to Johnson a respectable person of a very strong mind, who had little of that tenderness

which is common to human nature; as an instance of which, when I suggested to him that he should invite his son, who had been settled ten years in foreign parts, to come home and pay him a visit, his answer was, 'No, no, let him mind his business.' JOHNSON: 'I do not agree with him, sir, in this. Getting money is not all a man's business; to cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life.'

In the evening, Johnson, being in very good spirits, entertained us with several characteristical portraits; I regret that any of them escaped my retention and diligence. I found from experience that to collect my friend's conversation so as to exhibit it with any degree of its original flavour, it was necessary to write it down without delay. To record his sayings, after some distance of time, was like preserving or pickling long-kept and faded fruits, or other vegetables, which, when in that state, have little or nothing of their taste when fresh.

I shall present my readers with a series of what I gathered this evening from the Johnsonian garden.

'My friend, the late Earl of Cork, had a great desire to maintain the literary character of his family; he was a genteel man, but did not keep up the dignity of his rank. He was so generally civil that nobody thanked him for it.'

'Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes, we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole as the phœnix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been *at me*; but I would do

Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over.'

'Garrick's gaiety of conversation has delicacy and elegance. Foote makes you laugh more; but Foote has the air of a buffoon paid for entertaining the company. He, indeed, well deserves his hire.'

'Colley Cibber once consulted me as to one of his birthday odes, a long time before it was wanted. I objected very freely to several passages. Cibber lost patience, and would not read his ode to an end. When we had done with criticism, we walked over to Richardson's, the author of *Clarissa*, and I wondered to find Richardson displeased that I "did not treat Cibber with more *respect*." Now, sir, to talk of *respect* for a *player*!' (smiling disdainfully.) BOSWELL: 'There, sir, you are always heretical; you never will allow merit to a player.' JOHNSON: 'Merit, sir! what merit? Do you respect a rope-dancer or a ballad-singer?' BOSWELL: 'No, sir, but we respect a great player, as a man who can conceive lofty sentiments, and can express them gracefully.' JOHNSON: 'What, sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries, "*I am Richard the Third!*" Nay, sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things; he repeats and he sings: there is both recitation and music in his performance; the player only recites.' BOSWELL: 'My dear sir! you may turn anything into ridicule. I allow that a player of farce is not entitled to respect; he does a little thing: but he who can represent exalted characters and touch the noblest passions has very respectable powers: and mankind have agreed in admiring great talents for the stage. We must consider, too, that a great player does what

very few people are capable to do: his art is a very rare faculty. *Who* can repeat Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," as Garrick does it?' JOHNSON: 'Anybody may. Jemmy, there (a boy about eight years old, who was in the room), will do it as well in a week.' BOSWELL: 'No, no, sir: and as a proof of the merit of great acting, and of the value which mankind set upon it, Garrick has got £100,000.' JOHNSON: 'Is getting £100,000 a proof of excellence? That has been done by a scoundrel commissary.'

This was most fallacious reasoning. I was *sure*, for once, that I had the best side of the argument. I boldly maintained the just distinction between a tragedian and a mere theatrical droll; between those who rouse our terror and pity, and those who only make us laugh. 'If (said I) Betterton and Foote were to walk into this room, you would respect Betterton much more than Foote.' JOHNSON: 'If Betterton were to walk into this room with Foote, Foote would soon drive him out of it. Foote, sir, *quatenus* Foote, has powers superior to them all.'

On Monday, September 22, when at breakfast, I unguardedly said to Dr. Johnson, 'I wish I saw you and Mrs. Macaulay together.' He grew very angry, and, after a pause, while a cloud gathered on his brow, he burst out, 'No, sir; you would not see us quarrel, to make you sport. Don't you know that it is very uncivil to *pit* two people against one another?' Then, checking himself, and wishing to be more gentle, he added, 'I do not say you should be hanged or drowned for this; but it *is* very uncivil.' Dr. Taylor thought him in the wrong, and spoke to him privately of it; but I afterwards acknowledged to Johnson that I was

to blame, for I candidly owned that I meant to express a desire to see a contest between Mrs. Macaulay and him; but then I knew how the contest would end; so that I was to see him triumph. JOHNSON: 'Sir, you cannot be sure how a contest will end; and no man has a right to engage two people in a dispute by which their passions may be inflamed, and they may part with bitter resentment against each other. I would sooner keep company with a man from whom I must guard my pockets, than with a man who contrives to bring me into a dispute with somebody that he may hear it. That is the great fault of —— (naming one of our friends), endeavouring to introduce a subject upon which he knows two people in the company differ.' BOSWELL: 'But he told me, sir, he does it for instruction.' JOHNSON: 'Whatever the motive be, sir, the man who does so does very wrong. He has no more right to instruct himself at such risk, than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself.'

He found great fault with a gentleman of our acquaintance for keeping a bad table. 'Sir (said he), when a man is invited to dinner, he is disappointed if he does not get something good. I advised Mrs. Thrale, who has no card-parties at her house, to give sweetmeats, and such good things, in an evening, as are not commonly given, and she would find company enough come to her; for everybody loves to have things which please the palate put in their way, without trouble or preparation.' Such was his attention to the *minutiæ* of life and manners.

He thus characterised the Duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the present representative of that very

respectable family: 'He was not a man of superior abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse: he would have sent to Denmark for it. So unconditional was he in keeping his word; so high as to the point of honour.' This was a liberal testimony from the Tory Johnson to the virtue of a great Whig nobleman.

Mr. Burke's 'Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol, on the affairs of America,' being mentioned, Johnson censured the composition much, and he ridiculed the definition of a free government, viz., 'For any practical purpose, it is what the people think so.' 'I will let the King of France govern me on those conditions (said he), for it is to be governed just as I please.' And when Dr. Taylor talked of a girl being sent to a parish workhouse, and asked how much she could be obliged to work, 'Why (said Johnson), as much as is reasonable: and what is that? as much as *she thinks* reasonable.'

Dr. Johnson obligingly proposed to carry me to see Islam, a romantic scene, now belonging to a family of the name of Port, but formerly the seat of the Congreves. I suppose it is well described in some of the Tours. Johnson described it distinctly and vividly, at which I could not but express to him my wonder; because, though my eyes, as he observed, were better than his, I could not by any means equal him in representing visible objects. I said, the difference between us in this respect was as that between a man who has a bad instrument, but plays well on it, and a

man who has a good instrument, on which he can play very imperfectly.

I recollect a very fine amphitheatre, surrounded with hills covered with woods, and walks neatly formed along the side of a rocky steep, on the quarter next the house, with recesses under projections of rock, overshadowed with trees; in one of which recesses, we were told, Congreve wrote his *Old Bachelor*. We viewed a remarkable natural curiosity at Islam; two rivers bursting near each other from the rock, not from immediate springs, but after having run for many miles under ground. Plott, in his *History of Staffordshire*,[1] gives an account of this curiosity; but Johnson would not believe it, though we had the attestation of the gardener, who said he had put in corks where the river *Manyfold* sinks into the ground, and had catched them in a net placed before one of the openings where the water bursts out. Indeed, such subterraneous courses of water are found in various parts of our globe.[2]

Talking of Dr. Johnson's unwillingness to believe extraordinary things, I ventured to say, 'Sir, you come near Hume's argument against miracles, "That it is more probable witnesses should lie, or be mistaken, than that they should happen."' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, Hume, taking the proposition simply, is right. But the Christian revelation is not proved by the miracles alone, but as connected with prophecies, and with the doctrines in confirmation of which the miracles were wrought.'

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1 Page 69.

2 *See* Plott's *History of Staffordshire*, p. 88, and the authorities referred to by him.

He repeated his observation, that the differences among Christians are really of no consequence. 'For instance (said he), if a Protestant objects to a Papist, "You worship images"; the Papist can answer, "I do not insist on your doing it; you may be a very good Papist without it: I do it only as a help to my devotion."' I said the great article of Christianity is the revelation of immortality. Johnson admitted it was.

In the evening, a gentleman farmer, who was on a visit at Dr. Taylor's, attempted to dispute with Johnson in favour of Mungo Campbell, who shot Alexander, Earl of Eglintoune, upon his having fallen, when retreating from his Lordship, who he believed was about to seize his gun, as he had threatened to do. He said he should have done just as Campbell did. JOHNSON: 'Whoever would do as Campbell did, deserves to be hanged; not that I could, as a juryman, have found him legally guilty of murder; but I am glad they found means to convict him.' The gentleman farmer said, 'A poor man has as much honour as a rich man: and Campbell had *that* to defend.' Johnson exclaimed, 'A poor man has no honour.' The English yeoman, not dismayed, proceeded: 'Lord Eglintoune was a damned fool to run on upon Campbell, after being warned that Campbell would shoot him if he did.' Johnson, who could not bear anything like swearing, angrily replied, 'He was *not a damned* fool: he only thought too well of Campbell. He did not believe Campbell would be such a *damned* scoundrel, as to do so *damned* a thing.' His emphasis on *damned*, accompanied with frowning looks, reproved his opponent's want of decorum in *his* presence.

Talking of the danger of being mortified by rejection, when making approaches to the acquaintance of the great, I observed, 'I am, however, generally for trying, "Nothing venture, nothing have."' JOHNSON: 'Very true, sir; but I have always been more afraid of failing, than hopeful of success.' And, indeed, though he had all just respect for rank, no man ever less courted the favour of the great.

During this interview at Ashbourne, Johnson seemed to be more uniformly social, cheerful, and alert, than I had almost ever seen him. He was prompt on great occasions and on small. Taylor, who praised everything of his own to excess, in short, 'whose geese were all swans,' as the proverb says, expatiated on the excellence of his bulldog, which he told us, was 'perfectly well shaped.' Johnson, after examining the animal attentively, thus repressed the vain-glory of our host:—'No, sir, he is *not* well shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the forepart, to the *tenuity*—the thin part—behind, which a bulldog ought to have.' This *tenuity* was the only *hard word* that I heard him use during this interview, and it will be observed, he instantly put another expression in its place. Taylor said, a small bulldog was as good as a large one. JOHNSON: 'No, sir; for, in proportion to his size, he has strength: and your argument would prove, that a good bulldog may be as small as a mouse.' It was amazing how he entered with perspicuity and keenness upon everything that occurred in conversation. Most men, whom I know, would no more think of discussing a question about a bulldog than of attacking a bull.

I cannot allow any fragment whatever that floats in my memory concerning the great subject of this work to be lost. Though a small particular may appear trifling to some, it will be relished by others; while every little spark adds something to the general blaze: and to please the true, candid, warm admirers of Johnson, and in any degree increase the splendour of his reputation, I bid defiance to the shafts of ridicule, or even of malignity. Showers of them have been discharged at my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*; yet it still sails unhurt along the stream of time, and, as an attendant upon Johnson,

'Pursues the triumph, and partakes the gale.'

One morning after breakfast, when the sun shone bright, we walked out together, and 'pored' for some time with placid indolence upon an artificial waterfall, which Dr. Taylor had made by building a strong dyke of stone across the river behind the garden. It was now somewhat obstructed by branches of trees and other rubbish, which had come down the river, and settled close to it. Johnson, partly from a desire to see it play more freely, and partly from that inclination to activity which will animate, at times, the most inert and sluggish mortal, took a long pole which was lying on a bank, and pushed down several parcels of this wreck with painful assiduity, while I stood quietly by, wondering to behold the sage thus curiously employed, and smiling with a humorous satisfaction each time when he carried his point. He worked till he was quite out of breath; and having found a large dead cat so heavy that he could not move it after several efforts, 'Come,' said he (throwing

down the pole), '*you* shall take it now'; which I accordingly did, and being a fresh man, soon made the oat tumble over the cascade. This may be laughed at as too trifling to record; but it is a small characteristic trait in the Flemish picture which I give of my friend, and in which, therefore, I mark the most minute particulars. And let it be remembered, that *Æsop at play* is one of the instructive apologues of antiquity.

I mentioned an old gentleman of our acquaintance whose memory was beginning to fail. JOHNSON: 'There must be a diseased mind, where there is a failure of memory at seventy. A man's head, sir, must be morbid, if he fails so soon.' My friend, being now himself sixty-eight, might think thus: but I imagine, that *threescore and ten*, the Psalmist's period of sound human life in later ages, may have a failure, though there be no disease in the constitution.

Talking of Rochester's poems, he said he had given them to Mr. Steevens to castrate[1] for the edition of the poets, to which he was to write Prefaces. Dr. Taylor (the only time I ever heard him say anything witty[2]) observed, that 'if Rochester had been castrated himself, his exceptionable poems would not have been written.' I asked if Burnet had not given a good Life of Rochester. JOHNSON: 'We have a good *Death*; there is not much *Life*.' I asked whether Prior's poems were to be printed entire: Johnson said they were. I mentioned Lord Hailes' censure of Prior,

[1] [This was unnecessary, for it had been done in the early part of the present century, by Jacob Tonson.—M.]

[2] I am told, that Horace, Earl of Orford, has a collection of *bon mots* by persons who never said but one.

in his Preface to a collection of *Sacred Poems*, by various hands, published by him at Edinburgh a great many years ago, where he mentions, 'those impure tales, which will be the eternal opprobrium of their ingenious author.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, Lord Hailes has forgot. There is nothing in Prior that will excite to lewdness. If Lord Hailes thinks there is, he must be more combustible than other people.' I instanced the tale of *Paulo Purganti and his Wife*. JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is nothing there, but that his wife wanted to be kissed, when poor Paulo was out of pocket. No, sir, Prior is a lady's book. No lady is ashamed to have it standing in her library.'

The hypochondriac disorder being mentioned, Dr. Johnson did not think it so common as I supposed. 'Dr. Taylor (said he) is the same one day as another. Burke and Reynolds are the same. Beauclerk, except when in pain, is the same. I am not so myself; but this I do not mention commonly.'

I complained of a wretched changefulness, so that I could not preserve, for any long continuance, the same views of anything. It was most comfortable to me to experience, in Dr. Johnson's company, a relief from this uneasiness. His steady vigorous mind held firm before me those objects which my own feeble and tremulous imagination frequently presented, in such a wavering state, that my reason could not judge well of them.

Dr. Johnson advised me to-day to have as many books about me as I could, that I might read upon any subject upon which I had a desire for instruction at the time. 'What you read *then* (said he), you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately

ready, and the subject moulds in your mind, it is a chance if you have again a desire to study it.' He added, 'If a man never has an eager desire for instruction, he should prescribe a task for himself. But it is better when a man reads from immediate inclination.'

He repeated a good many lines of Horace's *Odes*, while we were in the chaise; I remember particularly the Ode '*Eheu, fugaces.*' [Lib. II. *Od.* 14.]

He said the dispute as to the comparative excellence of Homer or Virgil[1] was inaccurate. 'We must consider (said he), whether Homer was not the greatest poet, though Virgil may have produced the finest poem. Virgil was indebted to Homer for the whole invention of the structure of an epic poem, and for many of his beauties.'

He told me that Bacon was a favourite author with him; but he had never read his works till he was compiling the English Dictionary, in which he said I might see Bacon very often quoted. Mr. Seward recollects his having mentioned that a dictionary of the English language might be compiled from Bacon's writings alone, and that he had once an intention of giving an edition of Bacon, at least of his English works, and writing the life of that great man. Had he executed this intention, there can be no doubt that he would have done it in a most masterly manner. Mallet's *Life of Bacon* has no inconsider-

[1] I am informed by Mr. Langton, that a great many years ago he was present when this question was agitated between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Burke: and, to use Johnson's phrase, they 'talked their best'; Johnson for Homer, Burke for Virgil. It may well be supposed to have been one of the ablest and most brilliant contests that ever was exhibited. How much must we regret that it has not been preserved!

able merit as an acute and elegant dissertation relative to its subject; but Mallet's mind was not comprehensive enough to embrace the vast extent of Lord Verulam's genius and research. Dr. Warburton therefore observed, with witty justness, 'that Mallet in his *Life of Bacon* had forgotten that he was a philosopher; and if he should write the Life of the Duke of Marlborough, which he had undertaken to do, he would probably forget that he was a General.'

Wishing to be satisfied what degree of truth there was in a story which a friend of Johnson's and mine[1] had told me to his disadvantage, I mentioned it to him in direct terms; and it was to this effect: that a gentleman who had lived in great intimacy with him, shown him much kindness, and even relieved him from a spunging-house, having afterwards fallen into bad circumstances, was one day, when Johnson was at dinner with him, seized for debt, and carried to prison; that Johnson sat still undisturbed, and went on eating and drinking; upon which the gentleman's sister, who was present, could not suppress her indignation: 'What, sir (said she), are you so unfeeling, as not even to offer to go to my brother in his distress; you who have been so much obliged to him?' And that Johnson answered, 'Madam, I owe him no obligation; what he did for me he would have done for a dog.'

Johnson assured me that the story was absolutely false; but like a man conscious of being in the right, and desirous of completely vindicating himself from

[1] [Topham Beauclerk. The gentleman supposed to be referred to was Mr. Hervey Croker.—A. B.]

such a charge, he did not arrogantly rest on a mere denial, and on his general character, but proceeded thus: 'Sir, I was very intimate with that gentleman, and was once relieved by him from an arrest; but I never was present when he was arrested, never knew that he was arrested, and I believe he never was in difficulties after the time when he relieved me. I loved him much: yet, in talking of his general character, I may have said, though I do not remember that ever I did say so, that as his generosity proceeded from no principle, but was a part of his profusion, he would do for a dog what he would do for a friend: but I never applied this remark to any particular instance, and certainly not to his kindness to me. If a profuse man, who does not value his money, and gives a large sum to a whore, gives half as much, or an equally large sum to relieve a friend, it cannot be esteemed as virtue. This was all that I could say of that gentleman; and, if said at all, it must have been said after his death. Sir, I would have gone to the world's end to relieve him. The remark about the dog, if made by me, was such a sally as might escape one when painting a man highly.'

On Tuesday, September 23, Johnson was remarkably cordial to me. It being necessary for me to return to Scotland soon, I had fixed on the next day for my setting out, and I felt a tender concern at the thought of parting with him. He had, at this time, frankly communicated to me many particulars, which are inserted in this work in their proper places; and once, when I happened to mention that the expense of my jaunt would come to much more than I had computed, he said, 'Why, sir, if the expense were to

be an inconvenience, you would have reason to regret it: but, if you have had the money to spend, I know not that you could have purchased as much pleasure with it in any other way.'

During this interview at Ashbourne, Johnson and I frequently talked with wonderful pleasure of mere trifles which had occurred in our tour to the Hebrides; for it had left a most agreeable and lasting impression upon his mind.

He found fault with me for using the phrase to *make* money. 'Don't you see (said he) the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to *coin* it: you should say *get* money.' The phrase, however, is, I think, pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms, such as *pledging myself* for *undertaking*; *line* for *department* or *branch*, as, the *civil line*, the *banking line*. He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion* or *opinion*, when it is clear that idea can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind. We may have an *idea* or *image* of a mountain, a tree, a building; but we cannot surely have an *idea* or *image* of an *argument* or *proposition*. Yet we hear the sages of the law 'delivering their *ideas* upon the question under consideration'; and the first speakers in Parliament 'entirely coinciding in the *idea* which has been ably stated by an honourable member';—or 'reprobating an *idea* unconstitutional, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences to a great and free country.' Johnson called this 'modern cant.'

I perceived that he pronounced the word *heard* as if

spelt with a double *e, heerd,* instead of sounding it *herd,* as is most usually done.[1] He said his reason was that if it were pronounced *herd,* there would be a single exception from the English pronunciation of the syllable *ear,* and he thought it better not to have that exception.

He praised Grainger's 'Ode on Solitude,' in Dodsley's collection, and repeated, with great energy, the exordium—

> 'O Solitude, romantic maid,
> Whether by nodding towers you tread;
> Or haunt the desert's trackless gloom,
> Or hover o'er the yawning tomb;
> Or climb the Andes' clifted side,
> Or by the Nile's coy source abide;
> Or, starting from your half-year's sleep,
> From Hecla view the thawing deep;
> Or, at the purple dawn of day,
> Tadmor's marble waste survey'—

observing, 'This, sir, is very noble.'

In the evening our gentleman farmer and two others entertained themselves and the company with a great number of tunes on the fiddle. Johnson desired to have 'Let ambition fire thy mind,' played over again, and appeared to give a patient attention to it; though he owned to me that he was very insensible to the power of music. I told him that it affected me to such a degree as often to agitate my nerves painfully, producing in my mind alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that I was ready to shed tears; and of daring resolution, so that I was inclined to rush into

[1] [In the age of Queen Elizabeth this word was frequently written, as doubtless it was pronounced, *hard.*—M.]

the thickest part of the battle. 'Sir (said he), I should never hear it if it made me such a fool.'

Much of the effect of music, I am satisfied, is owing to the association of ideas. That air, which instantly and irresistibly excites in the Swiss, when in a foreign land, the *maladie du pais*, has, I am told, no intrinsic power of sound. And I know from my own experience that Scotch reels, though brisk, make me melancholy, because I used to hear them in my early years, at a time when Mr. Pitt called for soldiers 'from the mountains of the north,' and numbers of brave Highlanders were going abroad, never to return. Whereas the airs in the *Beggar's Opera*, many of which are very soft, never fail to render me gay, because they are associated with the warm sensations and high spirits of London. This evening, while some of the tunes of ordinary composition were played with no great skill, my frame was agitated, and I was conscious of a generous attachment to Dr. Johnson, as my preceptor and friend, mixed with an affectionate regret that he was an old man, whom I should probably lose in a short time. I thought I could defend him at the point of my sword. My reverence and affection for him were in full glow. I said to him, 'My dear sir, we must meet every year, if you don't quarrel with me.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, you are more likely to quarrel with me than I with you. My regard for you is greater almost than I have words to express; but I do not choose to be always repeating it; write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again.'

I talked to him of misery being the 'doom of man,'

in this life, as displayed in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. Yet I observed that things were done upon the supposition of happiness; grand houses were built, fine gardens were made, splendid places of public amusement were contrived, and crowded with company. JOHNSON: 'Alas, sir, these are all only struggles for happiness. When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced anywhere else. But as Xerxes wept when he viewed his immense army, and considered that not one of that great multitude would be alive a hundred years afterwards, so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle, that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual there would be distressing when alone.' This reflection was experimentally just. The feeling of languor,[1] which succeeds the animation of gaiety, is itself a very severe pain; and when the mind is then vacant, a thousand disappointments and vexations rush in and excruciate. Will not many even of my fairest readers allow this to be true?

I suggested, that being in love, and flattered with hopes of success; or having some favourite scheme in view for the next day, might prevent that wretchedness of which we had been talking. JOHNSON: 'Why,

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[1] Pope mentions,

'Stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair.'

But I recollect a couplet quite apposite to my subject in 'Virtue, an Ethic Epistle,' a beautiful and instructive poem by an anonymous writer in 1758; who, treating of pleasure in excess, says,

'Till languor, suffering on the rack of bliss,
Confess that man was never made for this.'

sir, it may sometimes be so as you suppose; but my conclusion is in general but too true.'

While Johnson and I stood in calm conference by ourselves in Dr. Taylor's garden, at a pretty late hour in a serene autumn night, looking up to the heavens, I directed the discourse to the subject of a future state. My friend was in a placid and most benignant frame of mind. 'Sir (said he), I do not imagine that all things will be made clear to us immediately after death, but that the ways of Providence will be explained to us very gradually.' I ventured to ask him whether, although the words of some texts of Scripture seemed strong in support of the dreadful doctrine of an eternity of punishment, we might not hope that the denunciation was figurative, and would not literally be executed. JOHNSON: 'Sir, you are to consider the intention of punishment in a future state. We have no reason to be sure that we shall then be no longer liable to offend against God. We do not know that even the angels are quite in a state of security; nay, we know that some of them have fallen. It may therefore, perhaps, be necessary, in order to preserve both men and angels in a state of rectitude, that they should have continually before them the punishment of those who have deviated from it; but we may hope that by some other means a fall from rectitude may be prevented. Some of the texts of Scripture upon this subject are, as you observe, indeed strong; but they may admit of a mitigated interpretation.' He talked to me upon this awful and delicate question in a gentle tone, and as if afraid to be decisive.

After supper I accompanied him to his apartment,

and at my request he dictated to me an argument in favour of the negro who was then claiming his liberty in an action in the Court of Session in Scotland. He had always been very zealous against slavery in every form, in which I with all deference thought that he discovered 'a zeal without knowledge.' Upon one occasion, when in company with some very grave men at Oxford, his toast was, 'Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies.' His violent prejudice against our West Indian and American settlers appeared whenever there was an opportunity. Towards the conclusion of his *Taxation no Tyranny*, he says, 'How is it that we hear the loudest *yelps* for liberty among the drivers of negroes?' and in his conversation with Mr. Wilkes he asked, 'Where did Beckford and Trecothick learn English?' That Trecothick could both speak and write good English is well known. I myself was favoured with his correspondence concerning the brave Corsicans. And that Beckford could speak it with a spirit of honest resolution even to his Majesty, as his 'faithful Lord Mayor of London,' is commemorated by the noble monument erected to him in Guildhall.

The argument dictated by Dr. Johnson was as follows:

'It must be agreed that in most ages many countries have had part of their inhabitants in a state of slavery; yet it may be doubted whether slavery can ever be supposed the natural condition of man.[1] It is impossible not to conceive that men in their original state were equal; and very difficult to imagine

[1] [Dr. Hill accurately points out that in Scotland, until 1779, colliers were sold along with the mines where they worked, and were outside *Habeas Corpus* altogether.—A. B.]

how one would be subjected to another but by violent compulsion. An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children. What is true of a criminal seems true likewise of a captive. A man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude; but it is very doubtful whether he can entail that servitude on his descendants; for no man can stipulate without commission for another. The condition which he himself accepts, his son or grandson perhaps would have rejected. If we should admit, what perhaps may with more reason be denied, that there are certain relations between man and man which may make slavery necessary and just, yet it can never be proved that he who is now suing for his freedom ever stood in any of those relations. He is certainly subject by no law, but that of violence, to his present master; who pretends no claim to his obedience, but that he bought him from a merchant of slaves, whose right to sell him never was examined. It is said that according to the constitutions of Jamaica he was legally enslaved; these constitutions are merely positive; and apparently injurious to the rights of mankind, because whoever is exposed to sale is condemned to slavery without appeal; by whatever fraud or violence he might have been originally brought into the merchant's power. In our own time princes have been sold, by wretches to whose care they were intrusted, that they might have a European education; but when once they were brought to a market in the plantations, little would avail either their dignity or their wrongs. The laws of Jamaica afford a negro no redress. His colour is considered as a sufficient testimony against him. It is to be lamented that moral right should ever give way to political convenience. But if temptations of interest are sometimes too strong for human virtue, let us at least retain a virtue where there is no temptation to quit it. In the present case there is apparent right on one side, and no convenience on the other. Inhabitants of this island can neither gain riches nor power by taking away the liberty of any part of the human species. The sum of the argument is this:—No man is by nature the property of another. The defendant is, therefore, by nature free. The rights of nature must be some way forfeited before they can be justly taken

away. That the defendant has by any act forfeited the rights of nature we require to be proved; and if no proof of such forfeiture can be given, we doubt not but the justice of the court will declare him free.'

I record Dr. Johnson's argument fairly upon this particular case; where, perhaps, he was in the right. But I beg leave to enter my most solemn protest against his general doctrine with respect to the *Slave Trade*. For I will resolutely say, that his unfavourable notion of it was owing to prejudice, and imperfect or false information. The wild and dangerous attempt which has for some time been persisted in to obtain an act of our legislature, to abolish so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest, must have been crushed at once had not the insignificance of the zealots who vainly took the lead in it, made the vast body of planters, merchants, and others, whose immense properties are involved in that trade, reasonably enough suppose that there could be no danger. The encouragement which the attempt has received excites my wonder and indignation; and though some men of superior abilities have supported it—whether from a love of temporary popularity, when prosperous; or a love of general mischief when desperate,—my opinion is unshaken. To abolish a *status*, which in all ages God has sanctioned, and man has continued, would not only be *robbery* to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects, but it would be extreme cruelty to the African savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre, or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life; especially now when their passage to the West Indies and their treatment

there is humanely regulated. To abolish this trade would be to

'shut the gates of mercy on mankind.'

Whatever may have passed elsewhere concerning it, the House of Lords is wise and independent: [1]

'Intaminatis fulget honoribus;
Nec sumit aut ponit secures
Arbitrio popularis auræ.' [2]

I have read, conversed, and thought much upon the subject, and would recommend to all who are capable of conviction, an excellent tract by my learned and ingenious friend John Ranby, Esq., entitled *Doubts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade.* To Mr. Ranby's *Doubts*, I will apply Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's expression in praise of a Scotch law-book, called *Dirleton's Doubts*: 'His *Doubts* (said his Lordship) are better than most people's *Certainties.*'

When I said now to Johnson, that I was afraid I kept him too late up, 'No, sir (said he), I don't care though I sit all night with you.' This was an animated speech from a man in his sixty-ninth year.

Had I been as attentive not to displease him as I ought to have been, I know not but this vigil might have been fulfilled; but I unluckily entered upon the controversy concerning the right of Great Britain to tax America, and attempted to argue in favour of our fellow-subjects on the other side of the Atlantic. I insisted that America might be very well governed, and made to yield sufficient revenue by the means of *influence*, as exemplified in Ireland, while the people

[1] [Is this the first time God was thanked for the House of Lords?—A. B.]

[2] Hor. *Carm.*, lib. III. Od. ii. 18.

might be pleased with the imagination of their participating of the British constitution, by having a body of representatives, without whose consent money could not be exacted from them. Johnson could not bear my thus opposing his avowed opinion, which he had exerted himself with an extreme degree of heat to enforce; and the violent agitation into which he was thrown, while answering, or rather reprimanding me, alarmed me so, that I heartily repented of my having unthinkingly introduced the subject. I myself, however, grew warm, and the change was great, from the calm state of philosophical discussion in which we had a little before been pleasingly employed.

I talked of the corruption of the British Parliament, in which I alleged that any question, however unreasonable or unjust, might be carried by a venal majority; and I spoke with high admiration of the Roman Senate, as if composed of men sincerely desirous to resolve what they should think best for their country. My friend would allow no such character to the Roman Senate; and he maintained that the British Parliament was not corrupt, and that there was no occasion to corrupt its members; asserting, that there was hardly ever any question of great importance before Parliament, any question in which a man might not very well vote either upon one side or the other. He said there had been none in his time except that respecting America.

We were fatigued by the contest, which was produced by my want of caution; and he was not then in the humour to slide into easy and cheerful talk. It therefore so happened, that we were after an hour or two very willing to separate and go to bed.

On Wednesday, September 24, I went into Dr. Johnson's room before he got up, and finding that the storm of the preceding night was quite laid, I sat down upon his bedside, and he talked with as much readiness and good humour as ever. He recommended to me to plant a considerable part of a large moorish farm which I had purchased, and he made several calculations of the expense and profit; for he delighted in exercising his mind on the science of numbers. He pressed upon me the importance of planting at the first in a very sufficient manner, quoting the saying '*In bello non licet bis errare*,' and adding, 'this is equally true in planting.'

I spoke with gratitude of Dr. Taylor's hospitality; and as evidence that it was not on account of his good table alone that Johnson visited him often, I mentioned a little anecdote which had escaped my friend's recollection, and at hearing which repeated he smiled. One evening, when I was sitting with him, Frank delivered this message: 'Sir, Dr. Taylor sends his compliments to you, and begs you will dine with him to-morrow. He has got a hare.' 'My compliments (said Johnson), and I'll dine with him—hare or rabbit.'

After breakfast I departed, and pursued my journey northwards. I took my post-chaise from the Green Man, a very good inn at Ashbourne,[1] the mistress of which, a mighty civil gentlewoman, curtseying very low, presented me with an engraving of the sign of her house; to which she had subjoined, in her own handwriting, an address in such singular simplicity of style, that I have preserved it pasted upon one of the boards

[1] [Still an excellent inn. Dr. Taylor's house, though standing much as it was, has been bought by the Railway Company.—A. B.]

of my original Journal at this time, and shall here insert it for the amusement of my readers:

'*M. KILLINGLEY'S duty waits upon Mr. Boswell, is exceedingly obliged to him for this favour; whenever he comes this way, hopes for the continuance of the same. Would Mr. Boswell name the house to his extensive acquaintance, it would be a singular favour conferr'd on one who has it not in her power to make any other return but her most grateful thanks, and sincerest prayers for his happiness in time, and in a blessed eternity.*'

'*Tuesday morn.*'

From this meeting at Ashbourne I derived a considerable accession to my Johnsonian store. I communicated my original Journal to Sir William Forbes, in whom I have always placed deserved confidence; and what he wrote to me concerning it is so much to my credit as the biographer of Johnson, that my readers will, I hope, grant me their indulgence for here inserting it: 'It is not once or twice going over it (says Sir William), that will satisfy me; for I find in it a high degree of instruction as well as entertainment; and I derive more benefit from Dr. Johnson's admirable discussions than I should be able to draw from his personal conversation; for I suppose there is not a man in the world to whom he discloses his sentiments so freely as to yourself.'

I cannot omit a curious circumstance which occurred at Edensor inn, close by Chatsworth, to survey the magnificence of which I had gone a considerable way out of my road to Scotland. The inn was then kept by a very jolly landlord, whose name, I think, was Malton. He happened to mention that the 'celebrated Dr. Johnson had been in his house.' I inquired *who*

this Dr. Johnson was, that I might hear my host's notion of him. 'Sir (said he), Johnson, the great writer; *Oddity*, as they call him. He's the greatest writer in England; he writes for the ministry; he has a correspondence abroad, and lets them know what's going on.'

My friend, who had a thorough dependence upon the authenticity of my relation without any *embellishment*, as *falsehood* or *fiction* is too gently called, laughed a good deal at this representation of himself.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Sept.* 29, 1777.

'My dear Sir,—By the first post I inform you of my safe arrival at my own house, and that I had the comfort of finding my wife and children all in good health.

'When I look back upon our late interview, it appears to me to have answered expectation better than almost any scheme of happiness that I ever put in execution. My Journal is stored with wisdom and wit; and my memory is filled with the recollection of lively and affectionate feelings, which now, I think, yield me more satisfaction than at the time when they were first excited. I have experienced this upon other occasions. I shall be obliged to you if you will explain it to me; for it seems wonderful that pleasure should be more vivid at a distance than when near. I wish you may find yourself in a humour to do me this favour; but I flatter myself with no strong hope of it; for I have observed, that unless upon very serious occasions, your letters to me are not *answers* to those which I write.'

[I then expressed much uneasiness that I had mentioned to him the name of the gentleman who had told me the story so much to his disadvantage, the truth of which he had completely refuted; for that my having done so might be interpreted as a breach of confidence, and offend one whose society I valued: therefore earnestly requesting that no notice might be taken of it to anybody, till I should be in London, and have an opportunity to talk it over with the gentleman.]

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—You will wonder, or you have wondered, why no letter has come from me. What you wrote at your return, had in it such a strain of cowardly caution as gave me no pleasure. I could not well do what you wished; I had no need to vex you with a refusal. I have seen Mr. ——, and as to him have set all right, without any inconvenience, so far as I know, to you. Mrs. Thrale had forgot the story. You may now be at ease.

'And at ease I certainly wish you, for the kindness that you showed in coming so long a journey to see me. It was pity to keep you so long in pain, but upon reviewing the matter, I do not see what I could have done better that I did.

'I hope you found at your return my dear enemy and all her little people quite well, and had no reason to repent of your journey. I think on it with great gratitude.

'I was not well when you left me at the Doctor's, and I grew worse; yet I stayed on, and at Lichfield was very ill. Travelling, however, did not make me worse; and when I came to London, I complied with a summons to go to Brighthelmstone, where I saw Beauclerk, and stayed three days.

'Our club has recommenced last Friday, but I was not there. Langton has another wench. Mrs. Thrale is in hopes of a young brewer. They got by their trade last year a very large sum, and their expenses are proportionate.

'Mrs. Williams's health is very bad. And I have had for some time a very difficult and laborious respiration; but I am better by purges, abstinence, and other methods. I am yet, however, much behindhand in my health and rest.

'Dr. Blair's sermons are now universally commended; but let him think that I had the honour of first finding and first praising his excellencies. I did not stay to add my voice to that of the public.

'My dear friend, let me thank you once more for your visit; you did me great honour, and I hope met with nothing that displeased you. I stayed long at Ashbourne, not much pleased, yet awkward at departing. I then went to Lichfield, where I found my friend at Stow Hill[1] very dangerously

[1] Mrs. Aston.

diseased. Such is life. Let us try to pass it well, whatever it be, for there is surely something beyond it.

'Well, now, I hope all is well. Write as soon as you can, to, dear sir, your affectionate servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Nov.* 29, 1777.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Nov.* 29, 1777.

'MY DEAR SIR,—This day's post has at length relieved me from much uneasiness, by bringing me a letter from you. I was, indeed, doubly uneasy;—on my own account and yours. I was very anxious to be secured against any bad consequences from my imprudence in mentioning the gentleman's name who had told me a story to your disadvantage; and as I could hardly suppose it possible that you would delay so long to make me easy, unless you were ill, I was not a little apprehensive about you. You must not be offended when I venture to tell you that you appear to me to have been too rigid upon this occasion. The '*cowardly caution which gave you no pleasure*,' was suggested to me by a friend here, to whom I mentioned the strange story and the detection of its falsity, as an instance how one may be deceived by what is apparently very good authority. But, as I am still persuaded, that as I might have obtained the truth, without mentioning the gentleman's name, it was wrong in me to do it, I cannot see that you are just in blaming my caution. But if you were ever so just in your disapprobation, might you not have dealt more tenderly with me?

'I went to Auchinleck about the middle of October, and passed some time with my father very comfortably.

. . . . .

'I am engaged in a criminal prosecution against a country schoolmaster, for indecent behaviour to his female scholars. There is no statute against such abominable conduct; but it is punishable at common law. I shall be obliged to you for your assistance in this extraordinary trial.—I ever am, my dear sir, your faithful humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

About this time I wrote to Johnson giving him an

account of the decision of the *negro cause*, by the Court of Session, which by those who hold even the mildest and best regulated slavery in abomination (of which number I do not hesitate to declare that I am none), should be remembered with high respect, and to the credit of Scotland; for it went upon a much broader ground than the case of *Somerset*, which was decided in England;[1] being truly the general question, whether a perpetual obligation of service to one master in any mode should be sanctified by the law of a free country. A negro, then called *Joseph Knight*, a native of Africa, who having been brought to Jamaica in the usual course of the slave-trade, and purchased by a Scotch gentleman in that island, had attended his master to Scotland, where it was officiously suggested to him that he would be found entitled to his liberty without any limitation. He accordingly brought his action, in the course of which the advocates on both sides did themselves great honour. Mr. Maclaurin has had the praise of Johnson, for his argument[2] in favour of the negro, and Mr. Macconochie distinguished himself on the same side, by his ingenuity and extraordinary research. Mr. Cullen, on the part of the master, discovered good information and sound reasoning; in which he was well supported by Mr. James Ferguson, remarkable for a manly understanding, and a knowledge both of books and the world.

[1] See *State Trials*, vol. xi. p. 339, and Mr. Hargrave's argument.

[2] The motto to it was happily chosen:

'Quamvis ille niger, quamvis tu candidus esses.'

I cannot avoid mentioning a circumstance no less strange than true that a brother advocate in considerable practice, but of whom it certainly cannot be said, *Ingenuas didicit fideliter artes*, asked Mr. Maclaurin, with a face of flippant assurance, 'Are these words your own?'

But I cannot too highly praise the speech which Mr. Henry Dundas generously contributed to the cause of the sooty stranger. Mr. Dundas's Scottish accent, which has been so often in vain obtruded as an objection to his powerful abilities in Parliament, was no disadvantage to him in his own country. And I do declare, that upon this memorable question he impressed me, and I believe all his audience, with such feelings as were produced by some of the most eminent orations of antiquity. This testimony I liberally give to the excellence of an old friend, with whom it has been my lot to differ very widely upon many political topics; yet I persuade myself without malice. A great majority of the Lords of Session decided for the negro. But four of their number, the Lord President, Lord Elliock, Lord Monboddo, and Lord Covington, resolutely maintained the lawfulness of a *status*, which has been acknowledged in all ages and countries, and that when freedom flourished, as in old Greece and Rome.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—This is the time of the year in which all express their good wishes to their friends, and I send mine to you and your family. May your lives be long, happy, and good. I have been much out of order, but, I hope, do not grow worse.

'The crime of the schoolmaster whom you are engaged to prosecute is very great, and may be suspected to be too common. In our law it would be a breach of the peace and a misdemeanour: that is, a kind of indefinite crime, not capital, but punishable at the discretion of the Court. You cannot want matter; all that needs to be said will easily occur.

'Mr. Shaw, the author of the Gaelic Grammar, desires me

to make a request for him to Lord Eglintoune, that he may be appointed chaplain to one of the new-raised regiments.

'All our friends are as they were; little has happened to them of either good or bad. Mrs. Thrale ran a great black hairdressing pin into her eye; but by great evacuation she kept it from inflaming, and it is almost well. Miss Reynolds has been out of order, but is better. Mrs. Williams is in a very poor state of health.

'If I should write on, I should, perhaps, write only complaints, and therefore I will content myself with telling you, that I love to think on you, and to hear from you; and that I am, dear sir, yours faithfully, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*December* 27, 1777.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Jan.* 8, 1778.

'DEAR SIR,—Your congratulations upon a new year are mixed with complaint: mine must be so too. My wife has for some time been very ill, having been confined to the house these three months by a severe cold, attended with alarming symptoms.

[Here I gave a particular account of the distress which the person, upon every account most dear to me, suffered; and of the dismal state of apprehension in which I now was: adding, that I never stood more in need of his consoling philosophy.]

'Did you ever look at a book written by Wilson, a Scotchman, under the Latin name of *Volusenus*, according to the custom of literary men at a certain period. It is entitled *De Animi Tranquillitate.* I earnestly desire tranquillity. *Bona res quies*; but I fear I shall never attain it: for, when unoccupied, I grow gloomy, and occupation agitates me to feverishness. . . . . .—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—To a letter so interesting as your last, it is proper to return some answer, however little I may be disposed to write.

'Your alarm at your lady's illness was reasonable, and not disproportionate to the appearance of the disorder. I hope your physical friend's conjecture is now verified, and all fear of a consumption at an end: a little care and exercise will then restore her. London is a good air for ladies; and if you bring her hither, I will do for her what she did for me—I will retire from my apartments for her accommodation. Behave kindly to her, and keep her cheerful.

'You always seem to call for tenderness. Know then, that in the first month of the present year I very highly esteem and very cordially love you. I hope to tell you this at the beginning of every year as long as we live; and why should we trouble ourselves to tell or hear it oftener?

'Tell Veronica, Euphemia, and Alexander, that I wish them, as well as their parents, many happy years.

'You have ended the negro's cause much to my mind. Lord Auchinleck and dear Lord Hailes were on the side of liberty. Lord Hailes' name reproaches me; but if he saw my languid neglect of my own affairs, he would rather pity than resent my neglect of his. I hope to mend, *ut et mihi vivam et amicis.*—I am, dear sir, yours affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*January* 14, 1778.

'My service to my fellow-traveller, Joseph.'

Johnson maintained a long and intimate friendship with Mr. Welch, who succeeded the celebrated Henry Fielding as one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for Westminster; kept a regular office for the police of that great district; and discharged his important trust, for many years, faithfully and ably. Johnson, who had an eager and unceasing curiosity to know human life in all its variety, told me that he attended Mr. Welch in his office for a whole winter, to hear the examinations of the culprits; but that he found an almost uniform tenor of misfortune, wretchedness, and profligacy. Mr. Welch's health being impaired,

he was advised to try the effect of a warm climate; and Johnson, by his interest with Mr. Chamier, procured him leave of absence to go to Italy, and a promise that the pension or salary of two hundred pounds a year, which Government allowed him, should not be discontinued. Mr. Welch accordingly went abroad, accompanied by his daughter Anne, a young lady of uncommon talents and literature.

TO SAUNDERS WELCH, ESQ., AT THE ENGLISH COFFEE-HOUSE, ROME

'Dear Sir,—To have suffered one of my best and dearest friends to pass almost two years in foreign countries without a letter, has a very shameful appearance of inattention. But the truth is, that there was no particular time in which I had anything particular to say, and general expressions of good-will, I hope, our long friendship is grown too solid to want.

'Of public affairs you have information from the newspapers wherever you go, for the English keep no secret: and of other things Mrs. Nollekens informs you. My intelligence could, therefore, be of no use; and Miss Nancy's letters made it unnecessary to write to you for information. I was likewise for some time out of humour, to find that motion and nearer approaches to the sun did not restore your health so fast as I expected. Of your health, the accounts have lately been more pleasing; and I have the gratification of imagining to myself a length of years which I hope you have gained, and of which the enjoyment will be improved by a vast accession of images and observations which your journeys and various residence have enabled you to make and accumulate. You have travelled with this felicity, almost peculiar to yourself, that your companion is not to part from you at your journey's end; but you are to live on together, to help each other's recollection, and to supply each other's omissions. The world has few greater pleasures than that which two friends enjoy in tracing back, at some distant time, those transactions and events through which they have passed together. One of the

old man's miseries is, that he cannot easily find a companion able to partake with him of the past. You and your fellow-traveller have this comfort in store, that your conversation will be not easily exhausted; one will always be glad to say what the other will always be willing to hear.

'That you may enjoy this pleasure long, your health must have your constant attention. I suppose you propose to return this year. There is no need of haste: do not come hither before the height of summer, that you may fall gradually into the inconveniences of your native clime. July seems to be the proper month. August and September will prepare you for the winter. After having travelled so far to find health, you must take care not to lose it at home; and I hope a little care will effectually preserve it.

'Miss Nancy has doubtless kept a constant and copious journal. She must not expect to be welcome when she returns, without a great mass of information. Let her review her journal often, and set down what she finds herself to have omitted, that she may trust to memory as little as possible, for memory is soon confused by a quick succession of things; and she will grow every day less confident of the truth of her own narratives, unless she can recur to some written memorials. If she has satisfied herself with hints, instead of full representations, let her supply the deficiencies now while her memory is yet fresh, and while her father's memory may help her. If she observes this direction, she will not have travelled in vain, for she will bring home a book with which she may entertain herself to the end of life. If it were not now too late, I would advise her to note the impression which the first sight of anything new and wonderful made upon her mind. Let her now set her thoughts down as she can recollect them; for faint as they may already be, they will grow every day fainter.

'Perhaps I do not flatter myself unreasonably when I imagine that you may wish to know something of me. I can gratify your benevolence with no account of health. The hand of time, or of disease, is very heavy upon me. I pass restless and uneasy nights, harassed with convulsions of my breast, and flatulencies at my stomach: and restless nights make heavy days. But nothing will be mended by complaints,

and therefore I will make an end. When we meet, we will try to forget our cares and our maladies, and contribute, as we can, to the cheerfulness of each other. If I had gone with you, I believe I should have been better, but I do not know that it was in my power.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Feb.* 3, 1778.'

This letter, while it gives admirable advice how to travel to the best advantage, and will, therefore, be of very general use, is another eminent proof of Johnson's warm and affectionate heart.[1]

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Feb.* 26, 1778.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Why I have delayed for near a month to thank you for your last affectionate letter, I cannot say; for my mind has been in better health these three weeks than for some years past. I believe I have evaded till I could send you a copy of Lord Hailes' opinion on the negro's cause, which he wishes you to read, and correct any errors that there may be in the language; for (says he), "we live in a critical, though not a learned age; and I seek to screen myself under the shield of Ajax." I communicated to him your apology for keeping the sheets of his *Annals* so long. He says, "I am sorry to see that Dr. Johnson is in a state of languor. Why should a sober Christian, neither an enthusiast nor a fanatic, be very merry or very sad?" I envy his Lordship's comfortable constitution; but well do I know that languor and dejection will afflict the best, however excellent their principles. I am in possession of Lord Hailes' opinion in his own handwriting, and have had it for some time. My excuse then for procrastination must be that I wanted to have it copied; and I

[1] The friendship between Mr. Welch and him was unbroken. Mr. Welch died not many months before him, and bequeathed him five guineas for a ring, which Johnson received with tenderness, as a kind memorial. His regard was constant for his friend Mr. Welch's daughters, of whom Jane is married to Mr. Nollekens, the statuary, whose merit is too well known to require any praise from me.

have now put that off so long that it will be better to bring it with me than send it, as I shall probably get you to look at it sooner, when I solicit you in person.

'My wife, who is, thank God, a good deal better, is much obliged to you for your very polite and courteous offer of your apartment; but if she goes to London, it will be best for her to have lodgings in the more airy vicinity of Hyde Park. I, however, doubt much if I shall be able to prevail with her to accompany me to the metropolis; for she is so different from you and me that she dislikes travelling; and she is so anxious about her children that she thinks she should be unhappy if at a distance from them. She therefore wishes rather to go to some country place in Scotland, where she can have them with her.

'I purpose being in London about the 20th of next month, as I think it creditable to appear in the House of Lords as one of Douglas's Counsel, in the great and last competition between Duke Hamilton and him.

. . . . .

'I am sorry poor Mrs. Williams is so ill: though her temper is unpleasant, she has always been polite and obliging to me. I wish many happy years to good Mr. Levet, who I suppose holds his usual place at your breakfast-table.[1]—I ever am, my dear sir, your affectionate humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO THE SAME

'*Edinburgh, Feb.* 28, 1778.

'MY DEAR SIR,—You are at present busy amongst the English poets, preparing, for the public instruction and entertainment, prefaces, biographical and critical. It will not, therefore, be out of season to appeal to you for the decision of a controversy which has arisen between a lady and me con-

[1] Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, humorously observed, that Levet used to breakfast on the crust of a roll, which Johnson, after tearing out the crumb for himself, threw to his humble friend.

[Perhaps the word *threw* is here too strong. Dr. Johnson never treated Levet with contempt; it is clear indeed from various circumstances that he had great kindness for him. I have often seen Johnson at breakfast, accompanied, or rather attended, by Levet, who had always the management of the tea-kettle.—M.]

cerning a passage in Parnell. That poet tells us that his Hermit quitted his cell—

> '"to know the world by sight,
> To find if *books* and *swains* report it right;
> (For yet by *swains alone* the world he knew,
> Whose feet came wand'ring o'er the nightly dew.)"

I maintain that there is an inconsistency here; for as the Hermit's notions of the world were formed from the reports both of *books* and *swains*, he could not justly be said to know by *swains alone*. Be pleased to judge between us, and let us have your reasons.[1]

'What do you say to *Taxation no Tyranny* now, after Lord North's declaration or confession, or whatever else his conciliatory speech should be called? I never differed from you in politics but upon two points—the Middlesex Election, and the Taxation of the Americans by the British *Houses of Representatives*. There is a *charm* in the word *Parliament*, so I avoid it. As I am a steady and a warm Tory, I regret that the King does not see it to be better for him to receive constitutional supplies from his American subjects by the voice of their own assemblies, where his Royal Person is represented, than through the medium of his British subjects. I am persuaded that the power of the Crown, which I wish to increase, would be greater when in contact with all its dominions, than if "the rays of regal bounty"[2] were "to shine" upon America, through that dense troubled body, a modern British Parliament. But enough of this subject, for your angry voice at Ashbourne upon it still sounds awful "in my mind's *ears*."—I ever am, my dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, March* 12, 1778.

'MY DEAR SIR,—The alarm of your late illness distressed me but a few hours; for on the evening of the day that it reached

[1] [See this subject discussed in a subsequent page, under May 3, 1779.—M.]

[2] Alluding to a line in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, describing Cardinal Wolsey in his state of elevation:

'Through him the rays of regal bounty shine.'

me, I found it contradicted in the *London Chronicle*, which I could depend upon as authentic concerning you, Mr. Strahan being the printer of it. I did not see the paper in which "the approaching extinction of a bright luminary" was announced, Sir William Forbes told me of it; and he says he saw me so uneasy that he did not give me the report in such strong terms as he read it. He afterwards sent me a letter from Mr. Langton to him, which relieved me much. I am, however, not quite easy, as I have not heard from you; and now I shall not have that comfort before I see you, for I set out for London to-morrow before the post comes in. I hope to be with you on Wednesday morning; and I ever am, with the highest veneration, my dear sir, your most obliged, faithful, and affectionate humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

On Wednesday, March 18, I arrived in London, and was informed by good Mr. Francis that his master was better, and was gone to Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, to which place I wrote to him, begging to know when he would be in town. He was not expected for some time; but next day, having called on Dr. Taylor, in Dean's Yard, Westminster, I found him there, and was told he had come to town for a few hours. He met me with his usual kindness, but instantly returned to the writing of something on which he was employed when I came in, and on which he seemed much intent. Finding him thus engaged, I made my visit very short, and had no more of his conversation, except his expressing a serious regret that a friend of ours was living at too much expense, considering how poor an appearance he made: 'If (said he) a man has splendour from his expense, if he spends his money in pride or in pleasure, he has value: but if he lets others spend it for him, which is most commonly the case, he has no advantage from it.'

On Friday, March 20, I found him at his own

house, sitting with Mrs. Williams, and was informed that the room formerly allotted to me was now appropriated to a charitable purpose; Mrs. Desmoulins,[1] and I think her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael, being all lodged in it. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that Mrs. Desmoulins herself told me, he allowed her half a guinea a week. Let it be remembered that this was above a twelfth part of his pension.

His liberality, indeed, was at all periods of his life very remarkable. Mr. Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received, told me that when he was a boy at the Charterhouse, his father wrote to him to go and pay a visit to Mr. Samuel Johnson, which he accordingly did, and found him in an upper room, of poor appearance. Johnson received him with much courteousness, and talked a great deal to him, as to a schoolboy, of the course of his education, and other particulars. When he afterwards came to know and understand the high character of this great man, he recollected his condescension with wonder. He added that when he was going away Mr. Johnson presented him with half a guinea; and this, said Mr. Howard, was at a time when he probably had not another.

We retired from Mrs. Williams to another room. Tom Davies soon after joined us. He had now unfortunately failed in his circumstances, and was much indebted to Dr. Johnson's kindness for obtaining for him many alleviations of his distress. After he went away, Johnson blamed his folly in quitting the stage,

[1] Daughter of Dr. Swinfen, Johnson's godfather, and widow of Mr. Desmoulins, a writing-master.

by which he and his wife got £500 a year. I said I believed it was owing to Churchill's attack upon him,

'He mouths a sentence, as curs mouth a bone.'

JOHNSON: 'I believe so too, sir. But what a man is he, who is to be driven from the stage by a line? Another line would have driven him his shop.'

I told him that I was engaged as Counsel at the bar of the House of Commons to oppose a road bill in the county of Stirling, and asked him what mode he would advise me to follow in addressing such an audience. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, you must provide yourself with a good deal of extraneous matter, which you are to produce occasionally, so as to fill up the time; for you must consider that they do not listen much.[1] If you begin with the strength of your cause, it may be lost before they begin to listen. When you catch a moment of attention, press the merits of the question upon them.' He said, as to one point of the merits, that he thought 'it would be a wrong thing to deprive the small landholders of the privilege of assessing themselves for making and repairing the high roads; *it was destroying a certain portion of liberty, without a good reason, which was always a bad thing.*' When I mentioned this observation next day to Mr. Wilkes, he pleasantly said, 'What! does *he* talk of liberty? *Liberty* is as ridiculous in *his* mouth as *Religion* in *mine.*' Mr. Wilkes's advice as to the best mode of speaking at the bar of the House of Commons was not more respectful towards the senate than that of Dr. Johnson. 'Be as impudent as you can, as merry as you can, and say whatever comes uppermost. Jack

[1] [This has always been the method of the Parliamentary Bar.—A. B.]

Lee is the best heard there of any Counsel; and he is the most impudent dog, and always abusing us.'

In my interview with Dr. Johnson this evening, I was quite easy, quite as his companion; upon which I find in my Journal the following reflection: 'So ready is my mind to suggest matter for dissatisfaction, that I felt a sort of regret that I was so easy. I missed that awful reverence with which I used to contemplate Mr. Samuel Johnson, in the complex magnitude of his literary, moral, and religious character. I have a wonderful superstitious love of *mystery*; when, perhaps, the truth is, that it is owing to the cloudy darkness of my own mind. I should be glad that I am more advanced in my progress of being, so that I can view Dr. Johnson with a steadier and clearer eye. My dissatisfaction to-night was foolish. Would it not be foolish to regret that we shall have less mystery in a future state? That "we now see in a glass, darkly," but shall "then see face to face"?' This reflection, which I thus freely communicate, will be valued by the thinking part of my readers, who may have themselves experienced a similar state of mind.

He returned next day to Streatham, to Mr. Thrale's; where, as Mr. Strahan once complained to me, 'he was in a great measure absorbed from the society of his old friends.' I was kept in London by business, and wrote to him on the 27th, that a separation from him for a week, when we were so near, was equal to a separation for a year, when we were at four hundred miles distance.' I went to Streatham on Monday, March 30. Before he appeared, Mrs. Thrale made a very characteristical remark: 'I do not know for

certain what will please Dr. Johnson: but I know for certain that it will displease him to praise anything, even what he likes, extravagantly.'

At dinner he laughed at querulous declamations against the age, on account of luxury, increase of London, scarcity of provisions, and other such topics. 'Houses (said he) will be built till rents fall; and corn is more plentiful now than ever it was.'

I had before dinner repeated a ridiculous story told me by an old man, who had been a passenger with me in the stage-coach to-day Mrs. Thrale having taken occasion to allude to it, in talking to me, called it 'The story told you by the old *woman*.' 'Now, madam (said I), give me leave to catch you in the fact: it was not an old *woman*, but an old *man*, whom I mentioned as having told me this.' I presumed to take an opportunity, in presence of Johnson, of showing this lively lady how ready she was, unintentionally, to deviate from exact authenticity of narration.

'Thomas à Kempis (he observed) must be a good book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it. It is said to have been printed, in one language or other, as many times as there have been months since it first came out.[1] I always was struck with this sentence in it: "Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be."'[2]

He said, 'I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for

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[1] [The first edition was in 1492. Between that period and 1792, according to this account, there were three thousand six hundred editions. But this is very improbable.—M.]

[2] [The original passage is:—Si non potes te talem facere, qualem vis, quomodo poteris alium ad tuum habere beneplacitum?—*De Imit. Christi*, lib. i. cap. xvi.—J. B.—O.]

having published a selection of his works: but, upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any author, if he does not put the rest out of the way. A man, for instance, may print the *Odes* of Horace alone.' He seemed to be in a more indulgent humour than when this subject was discussed between him and Mr. Murphy.

When we were at tea and coffee there came in Lord Trimlestown, in whose family was an ancient Irish peerage, but it suffered by taking the generous side in the troubles of the last century.[1] He was a man of pleasing conversation, and was accompanied by a young gentleman, his son.

I mentioned that I had in my possession the *Life* of Sir Robert Sibbald, the celebrated Scottish antiquary, and founder of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh, in the original manuscript in his own handwriting; and that it was, I believed, the most natural and candid account of himself that ever was given by any man. As an instance, he tells that the Duke of Perth, then Chancellor of Scotland, pressed him very much to come over to the Roman Catholic faith: that he resisted all his Grace's arguments for a considerable time, till one day he felt himself, as it were, instantaneously convinced, and with tears in his eyes ran into the Duke's arms, and embraced the ancient religion; that he continued very steady in it for some time, and accompanied his Grace to London one winter, and lived in his household; that there he

[1] [Since this was written, the attainder has been reversed; and Nicholas Barnewall is now a peer of Ireland with this title. The person mentioned in the text had studied physic, and prescribed gratis to the poor. Hence arose the subsequent conversation.—M.]

found the rigid fasting prescribed by the Church very severe upon him; that this disposed him to reconsider the controversy, and having then seen that he was in the wrong, he returned to Protestantism. I talked of some time or other publishing this curious life. MRS. THRALE: 'I think you had as well let alone that publication. To discover such weakness exposes a man when he is gone.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, it is an honest picture of human nature. How often are the primary motives of our greatest actions as small as Sibbald's, for his re-conversion?' MRS. THRALE: 'But may they not as well be forgotten?' JOHNSON: 'No, madam, a man loves to review his own mind. That is the use of a diary, or journal.' LORD TRIMLESTOWN: 'True, sir. As the ladies love to see themselves in a glass, so a man likes to see himself in his journal.' BOSWELL: 'A very pretty allusion.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, indeed.' BOSWELL: 'And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal.' I next year found the very same thought in Atterbury's 'Funeral Sermon on Lady Cutts'; where, having mentioned her diary, he says, 'In this glass she every day dressed her mind.' This is a proof of coincidence, and not of plagiarism; for I had never read that sermon before.

Next morning, while we were at breakfast, Johnson gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness: I mean a strict attention to truth, even in the most minute particulars. 'Accustom your children (said he) constantly to this; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it hap-

pened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end.' BOSWELL: 'It may come to the door: and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened.' Our lively hostess, whose fancy was impatient of the rein, fidgeted at this, and ventured to say, 'Nay, this is too much. If Mr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day, if one is not perpetually watching.' JOHNSON: 'Well, madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.'

In his review of Dr. Warton's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, Johnson has given the following salutary caution upon this subject: 'Nothing but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive that so many groundless reports should be propagated, as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think, as what they know; some men of confused memories and habitual inaccuracy, ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on, without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods, which are afterwards innocently diffused by successive relaters.'[1] Had he lived to read what Sir John Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi have related concerning himself, how

[1] *Literary Magazine*, 1756, p. 37.

much would he have found his observation illustrated! He was indeed so much impressed with the prevalence of falsehood, voluntary or unintentional, that I never knew any person who upon hearing an extraordinary circumstance told, discovered more of the *incredulus odi*. He would say with a significant look and decisive tone, 'It is not so. Do not tell this again.'[1] He inculcated upon all his friends the importance of perpetual vigilance against the slightest degrees of falsehood; the effect of which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds observed to me, has been, that all who were of his *school* are distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree if they had not been acquainted with Johnson.

Talking of ghosts, he said, 'It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it.'

He said, 'John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.'

On Friday, April 3, I dined with him in London, in

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[1] The following plausible but over-prudent counsel on this subject is given by an Italian writer, quoted by '*Redi de generatione insectorum*,' with the epithet of '*divini poetæ*.'

'Sempre à quel ver ch'a faccia di menzogna
Dei l'uom chiudere le labbra quanto ei puote;
Però chez zenza colpa fa vergogna.'

[It is strange that Boswell should not have discovered these lines were from Dante's *Inferno*, xvi. 124.—CROKER.]

a company where were present several eminent men, whom I shall not name, but distinguish their parts in the conversation by different letters.

F. 'I have been looking at this famous antique marble dog of Mr. Jennings, valued at a thousand guineas, said to be Alcibiades' dog.' JOHNSON: 'His tail then must be docked. That was the mark of Alcibiades' dog.' E. 'A thousand guineas! The representation of no animal whatever is worth so much. At this rate a dead dog would indeed be better than a living lion.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is not the worth of the thing, but of the skill in forming it, which is so highly estimated. Everything that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could not do, is valuable. The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose;[1] Johnson, who rode upon three horses at a time; in short, all such men deserved the applause of mankind, not on account of the use of what they did, but of the dexterity which they exhibited.' BOSWELL: 'Yet a misapplication of time and assiduity is not to be encouraged. Addison, in one of his *Spectators*, commends the judgment of a King, who, as a suitable reward to a man that by long perseverance had attained to the art of throwing a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, gave him a bushel of barley.' JOHNSON: 'He must have been a King of Scotland, where barley is scarce.' F. 'One of the most remarkable antique figures of an animal is the boar at Florence.' JOHNSON: 'The first boar that is well made in

[1] [Mattocks was the name of this worthy. See Goldsmith's *Works* (Cunningham's edition, vol. ii. 152): *Citizen of the World*, Letter xxi.—A. B.]

marble should be preserved as a wonder. When men arrive at a facility of making boars well, then the workmanship is not of such value; but they should, however, be preserved as examples, and as a greater security for the restoration of the art, should it be lost.'

E. 'We hear prodigious complaints at present of emigration. I am convinced that emigration makes a country more populous.' J. 'That sounds very much like a paradox.' E. 'Exportation of men, like exportation of all other commodities, makes more be produced.' JOHNSON: 'But there would be more people were there not emigration, provided there were food for more.' E. 'No; leave a few breeders, and you 'll have more people than if there were no emigration.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, it is plain there will be more people if there are more breeders. Thirty cows in good pasture will produce more calves than ten cows, provided they have good bulls.' E. 'There are bulls enough in Ireland.' JOHNSON (smiling): 'So, sir, I should think from your argument.' BOSWELL: 'You said exportation of men, like exportation of other commodities, makes more to be produced. But a bounty is given to encourage the exportation of corn, and no bounty is given for the exportation of men; though, indeed, those who go gain by it.' R. 'But the bounty on the exportation of corn is paid at home.' E. 'That 's the same thing.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir.' R. 'A man who stays at home gains nothing by his neighbour's emigrating.' BOSWELL: 'I can understand that emigration may be the cause that more people may be produced in a country; but the country will not therefore be the more populous; for

the people issue from it. It can only be said that there is a flow of people. It is an encouragement to have children, to know that they can get a living by emigration.' R. 'Yes, if there were an emigration of children under six years of age. But they don't emigrate till they could earn their livelihood in some way at home.' C. 'It is remarkable that the most unhealthy countries, where there are the most destructive diseases, such as Egypt and Bengal, are the most populous.' JOHNSON: 'Countries which are the most populous have the most destructive diseases. *That* is the true state of the proposition.' C. 'Holland is very unhealthy, yet it is exceedingly populous.' JOHNSON: 'I know not that Holland is unhealthy. But its populousness is owing to an influx of people from all other countries. Disease cannot be the cause of populousness, for it not only carries off a great proportion of the people, but those who are left are weakened, and unfit for the purposes of increase.'

R. 'Mr. E.,[1] I don't mean to flatter, but when posterity reads one of your speeches in Parliament, it will be difficult to believe that you took so much pains, knowing with certainty that it could produce no effect, that not one vote would be gained by it.' E. 'Waiving your compliment to me, I shall say in general that it is very well worth while for a man to take pains to speak well in Parliament. A man who has vanity speaks to display his talents; and if a man speaks well he gradually establishes a certain reputation and consequence in the general opinion, which, sooner or later, will have its political reward. Besides, though

[1] [In this conversation E is Burke, and J, Reynolds, but who the other initials stand for, even Croker did not know.—A. B.]

not one vote is gained, a good speech has its effect. Though an act which has been ably opposed passes into a law, yet in its progress it is modelled, it is softened in such a manner that we see plainly the minister has been told that the members attached to him are so sensible of its injustice or absurdity from what they have heard, that it must be altered.' JOHNSON: 'And, sir, there is a gratification of pride. Though we cannot out-vote them we will out-argue them. They shall not do wrong without its being shown both to themselves and to the world.' E. 'The House of Commons is a mixed body (I except the minority, which I hold to be pure [smiling], but I take the whole House). It is a mass by no means pure; but neither is it wholly corrupt, though there is a large proportion of corruption in it. There are many members who generally go with the minister, who will not go all lengths. There are many honest, well-meaning country gentlemen who are in Parliament only to keep up the consequence of their families. Upon most of these a good speech will have influence.' JOHNSON: 'We are all more or less governed by interest. But interest will not make us do everything. In a case which admits of doubt, we try to think on the side which is for our interest, and generally bring ourselves to act accordingly. But the subject must admit of diversity of colouring; it must receive a colour on that side. In the House of Commons there are members enough who will not vote what is grossly unjust or absurd. No, sir, there must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance.' BOSWELL: 'There is surely always a majority in Parliament who have places, or who want to have them,

and who therefore will be generally ready to support government without requiring any pretext.' E. 'True, sir; that majority will always follow

'"Quo clamor vocat et turba faventium."'

Boswell: 'Well, now, let us take the common phrase, Place-hunters. I thought they had hunted without regard to anything, just as their huntsman, the minister, leads, looking only to the prey.'[1] J. 'But taking your metaphor, you know that in hunting there are few so desperately keen as to follow without reserve. Some do not choose to leap ditches and hedges and risk their necks, or gallop over steeps, or even to dirty themselves in bogs and mire.' Boswell: 'I am glad there are some good, quiet, moderate political hunters.' E. 'I believe in any body of men in England I should have been in the minority; I have always been in the minority.' P. 'The House of Commons resembles a private company. How seldom is any man convinced by another's argument; passion and pride rise against it.' R. 'What would be the consequence if a minister, sure of a majority in the House of Commons, should resolve that there should be no speaking at all upon his side.' E. 'He must soon go out. That has been tried; but it was found it would not do.'

E. 'The Irish language is not primitive; it is Teutonic, a mixture of the northern tongues; it has much English in it.' Johnson: 'It may have been

[1] Lord Bolingbroke, who, however detestable us a metaphysician, must be allowed to have had admirable talents as a political writer, thus describes the House of Commons, in his letter to Sir William Wyndham: 'You know the nature of that assembly; they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged.'

radically Teutonic; but the English and High Dutch have no similarity to the eye, though radically the same. Once, when looking into Low Dutch, I found, in a whole page, only one word similar to English; *stroem*, like *stream*, and it signified *tide*.' E. 'I remember having seen a Dutch sonnet, in which I found this word, *roesnopies*. Nobody would at first think that this could be English; but, when we inquire, we find *roes*, rose, and *nopie*, knob; so we have *rosebuds*.'

JOHNSON: 'I have been reading Thicknesse's *Travels*, which I think are entertaining.' BOSWELL: 'What, sir, a good book?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, to read once. I do not say you are to make a study of it, and digest it; and I believe it to be a true book in his intention. All travellers generally mean to tell truth; though Thicknesse observes, upon Smollett's account of his alarming a whole town in France by firing a blunderbuss, and frightening a French nobleman till he made him tie on his portmanteau, that he would be loth to say Smollett had told two lies in one page; but he had found the only town in France where these things could have happened. Travellers must often be mistaken. In everything, except where mensuration can be applied, they may honestly differ. There has been of late a strange turn in travellers to be displeased.'

E. 'From the experience which I have had—and I have had a great deal—I have learned to think *better* of mankind.' JOHNSON: 'From my experience I have found them worse in commercial dealings, more disposed to cheat than I had any notion of; but more disposed to do one another good than I had conceived.' J. 'Less just and more beneficent.' JOHNSON: 'And really it is wonderful, considering how much atten-

tion is necessary for men to take care of themselves, and ward off immediate evils which press upon them, it is wonderful how much they do for others. As it is said of the greatest liar, that he tells more truth than falsehood; so it may be said of the worst man, that he does more good than evil.' BOSWELL: 'Perhaps from experience men may be found *happier* than we suppose.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; the more we inquire we shall find men less happy.' P. 'As to thinking better or worse of mankind from experience, some cunning people will not be satisfied unless they have put men to the test, as they think. There is a very good story told of Sir Godfrey Kneller in his character of a justice of the peace. A gentleman brought his servant before him upon an accusation of having stolen some money from him; but it having come out that he had laid it purposely in the servant's way, in order to try his honesty, Sir Godfrey sent the master to prison.'[1] JOHNSON: 'To resist temptation once is not a sufficient proof of honesty. If a servant, indeed, were to resist the continued temptation of silver lying in a window, as some people let it lie, when he is sure his master does not know how much there is of it, he would give a strong proof of honesty. But this is a proof to which you have no right to put a man. You know, humanly speaking, there is a certain degree of temptation, which will overcome any virtue. Now, in so far as you approach temptation to a man, you do

[1] Pope thus introduces this story:

> 'Faith, in such case if you should prosecute,
> I think Sir Godfrey should decide the suit,
> Who sent the thief who stole the cash away,
> And punish'd him that put it in his way.'
>
> —*Imitations of Horace*, book ii. epist. 2.

him an injury; and, if he is overcome, you share his guilt.' P. 'And, when once overcome, it is easier for him to be got the better of again.' BOSWELL: 'Yes, you are his seducer; you have debauched him. I have known a man resolved to put friendship to the test, by asking a friend to lend him money, merely with that view, when he did not want it.' JOHNSON: 'That is very wrong, sir. Your friend may be a narrow man, and yet have many good qualities; narrowness may be his only fault. Now you are trying his general character as a friend by one particular singly, in which he happens to be defective, when, in truth, his character is composed of many particulars.'

E. 'I understand the hogshead of claret which this society was favoured with by our friend the Dean, is nearly out; I think he should be written to, to send another of the same kind. Let the request be made with a happy ambiguity of expression, so that we may have the chance of his sending *it* also as a present.' JOHNSON: 'I am willing to offer my services as secretary on this occasion.' P. 'As many as are for Dr. Johnson being secretary hold up your hands.—Carried unanimously.' BOSWELL: 'He will be our Dictator.' JOHNSON: 'No, the company is to dictate to me. I am only to write for wine; and I am quite disinterested, as I drink none; I shall not be suspected of having forged the application. I am no more than humble *scribe*.' E. 'Then you shall *pre*scribe.' BOSWELL: 'Very well. The first play of words today.' J. 'No, no; the *bulls* in Ireland.' JOHNSON: 'Were I your Dictator you should have no wine. It would be my business *cavere ne quid detrimenti*

Respublica caperet, and wine is dangerous. Rome was ruined by luxury' (smiling). E. 'If you allow no wine as Dictator, you shall not have me for your master of horse.'

On Saturday, April 4, I drank tea with Johnson at Dr. Taylor's, where he had dined. He entertained us with an account of a tragedy written by a Dr. Kennedy (not the Lisbon physician). 'The catastrophe of it (said he), was that a King, who was jealous of his Queen with his prime minister, castrated himself.[1] This tragedy was actually shown about in manuscript to several people, and amongst others, to Mr. Fitzherbert, who repeated to me two lines of the Prologue:

> ' "Our hero's fate we have but gently touch'd;
> The fair might blame us, if it were less couch'd."

It is hardly to be believed what absurd and indecent images men will introduce into their writings, without being sensible of the absurdity and indecency. I remember Lord Orrery told me that there was a pamphlet written against Sir Robert Walpole, the whole of which was an allegory on the Phallic obscenity. The Duchess of Buckingham asked Lord Orrery *who* this person was? He answered he did not know. She said she would send to Mr. Pulteney, who, she supposed, could inform her. So then to prevent her from making herself ridiculous, Lord Orrery sent her

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1 The reverse of the story of *Combabus*, on which Mr. David Hume told Lord Macartney that a friend of his had written a tragedy. It is, however, possible that I may have been inaccurate in my perception of what Dr. Johnson related, and that he may have been talking of the same ludicrous tragical subject that Mr. Hume had mentioned.

[The story of Combabus, which was originally told by Lucian, may be found in Bayle's *Dictionary*.—M.]

Grace a note, in which he gave her to understand what was meant.'

He was very silent this evening; and read in a variety of books: suddenly throwing down one and taking up another.

He talked of going to Streatham that night. TAYLOR: 'You 'll be robbed if you do; or you must shoot a highwayman. Now I would rather be robbed than do that; I would not shoot a highwayman.' JOHNSON: 'But I would rather shoot him in the instant when he is attempting to rob me, than afterwards swear against him at the Old Bailey to take away his life, after he has robbed me. I am surer I am right in the one case than in the other. I may be mistaken as to the man when I swear; I cannot be mistaken if I shoot him in the act. Besides, we feel less reluctance to take away a man's life when we are heated by the injury, than to do it at a distance of time by an oath, after we have cooled.' BOSWELL: 'So, sir, you would rather act from the motive of private passion, than that of public advantage?' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, when I shoot the highwayman, I act from both.' BOSWELL: 'Very well, very well. There is no catching him.' JOHNSON: 'At the same time, one does not know what to say. For perhaps one may, a year after, hang himself from uneasiness for having shot a highwayman.[1]

[1] The late Duke of Montrose was generally said to have been uneasy on that account; but I can contradict the report from his Grace's own authority. As he used to admit me to very easy conversation with him, I took the liberty to introduce the subject. His Grace told me, that when riding one night near London, he was attacked by two highwaymen on horseback, and that he instantly shot one of them, upon which the other galloped off; that his servant, who was very well mounted, proposed to pursue him and take him, but that his Grace said, 'No, we have had blood enough: I hope the man may live to repent.' His Grace, upon my presuming to put the question, assured me that his mind was not at all clouded by what he had thus done in self-defence.

Few minds are fit to be trusted with so great a thing.' BOSWELL: 'Then, sir, you would not shoot him?' JOHNSON: 'But I might be vexed afterwards for that too.'

Thrale's carriage not having come for him, as he expected, I accompanied him some part of the way home to his own house. I told him that I had talked of him to Mr. Dunning a few days before, and had said, that in his company we did not so much interchange conversation, as listen to him; and that Dunning observed upon this, 'One is always willing to listen to Dr. Johnson': to which I answered, 'That is a great deal from you, sir.' 'Yes, sir (said Johnson), a great deal indeed. Here is a man willing to listen, to whom the world is listening all the rest of the year.' BOSWELL: 'I think, sir, it is right to tell one man of such a handsome thing, which has been said of him by another. It tends to increase benevolence.' JOHNSON: 'Undoubtedly it is right, sir.'

On Tuesday, April 7, I breakfasted with him at his house. He said, 'nobody was content.' I mentioned to him a respectable person in Scotland whom he knew; and I asserted that I really believed he was always content. JOHNSON: 'No, sir, he is not content with the present; he has always some new scheme, some new plantation, something which is future. You know he was not content as a widower, for he married again.' BOSWELL: 'But he is not restless.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, he is only locally at rest. A chemist is locally at rest; but his mind is hard at work. This gentleman has done with external exertions. It is too late for him to engage in distant projects.' BOSWELL: 'He seems to amuse himself quite well; to

have his attention fixed, and his tranquillity preserved by very small matters. I have tried this, but it would not do with me.' JOHNSON (laughing): 'No, sir; it must be born with a man to be contented to take up with little things. Women have a great advantage that they may take up with little things, without disgracing themselves; a man cannot, except with fiddling. Had I learned to fiddle, I should have done nothing else.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, did you ever play on any musical instrument?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. I once bought me a flageolet; but I never made out a tune.' BOSWELL: 'A flageolet, sir!—so small an instrument?[1] I should have liked to hear you play on the violoncello. *That* should have been *your* instrument.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I might as well have played on the violoncello as another; but I should have done nothing else. No, sir; a man would never undertake great things could he be amused with small. I once tried knotting. Dempster's sister undertook to teach me; but I could not learn it.' BOSWELL: 'So, sir; it will be related in pompous narrative, "Once for his amusement he tried knotting; nor did this Hercules disdain the distaff."' JOHNSON: 'Knitting of stockings is a good amusement. As a freeman of Aberdeen I should be a knitter of stockings.' He asked me to go down with him and dine at Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, to which I agreed. I had lent him *An Account of Scotland in* 1702, written by a man of various inquiry, an English chaplain to a regiment

[1] When I told this to Miss Seward she smiled, and repeated with admirable readiness from *Acis and Galatea*:

'"Bring me a hundred reeds of ample growth,
To make a pipe for my CAPACIOUS MOUTH.'

stationed there. JOHNSON: 'It is sad stuff, sir, miserably written, as books in general then were. There is now an elegance of style universally diffused. No man now writes so ill as Martin's *Account of the Hebrides* is written. A man could not write so ill if he should try. Set a merchant's clerk now to write, and he'll do better.'

He talked to me with serious concern of a certain female friend's 'laxity of narration and inattention to truth.' 'I am as much vexed (said he), at the ease with which she hears it mentioned to her, as at the thing itself. I told her, "Madam, you are contented to hear every day said to you, what the highest of mankind have died for, rather than bear." You know, sir, the highest of mankind have died rather than bear to be told they had uttered a falsehood. Do talk to her of it: I am weary.'

BOSWELL: 'Was not Dr. John Campbell a very inaccurate man in his narrative, sir? He once told me that he drank thirteen bottles of port at a sitting.'[1] JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, I do not know that Campbell ever lied with pen and ink; but you could not entirely depend on anything that he told you in conversation,

[1] Lord Macartney observes upon this passage, 'I have heard him tell many things, which, though embellished by their mode of narrative, had their foundation in truth; but I never remember anything approaching to this. If he had written it I should have supposed some wag had put the figure of one before the three.' I am, however, absolutely certain that Dr. Campbell told me it, and I gave particular attention to it, being myself a lover of wine, and therefore curious to hear whatever is remarkable concerning drinking. There can be no doubt that some men can drink without suffering any injury, such a quantity, as to others appears incredible. It is but fair to add, that Dr. Campbell told me he took a very long time to this great potation; and I have heard Dr. Johnson say, 'Sir, if a man drinks very slowly, and lets one glass evaporate before he takes another, I know not how long he may drink.' Dr. Campbell mentioned a colonel of militia who sat with him all the time, and drank equally.

if there was fact mixed with it. However, I loved Campbell: he was a solid orthodox man; he had a reverence for religion. Though defective in practice, he was religious in principle; and he did nothing grossly wrong that I have heard.'[1]

I told him that I had been present the day before when Mrs. Montague, the literary lady, sat to Miss Reynolds for her picture; and that she said, 'she had bound up Mr. Gibbon's *History* without the last two offensive chapters; for that she thought the book so far good, as it gave, in an elegant manner, the substance of the bad writers *medii ævi*, which the late Lord Lyttelton advised her to read.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, she has not read them; she shows none of this impetuosity to me, she does not know Greek, and, I fancy, knows little Latin. She is willing you should think she knows them; but she does not say she does.' BOSWELL: 'Mr. Harris, who was present, agreed with her.' JOHNSON: 'Harris was laughing at her, sir. Harris is a sound sullen scholar, he does not like interlopers. Harris, however, is a prig, and a bad prig.[2] I looked into his book, and thought he did not understand his own system.' BOSWELL: 'He says plain things in a formal and abstract way, to be sure; but his method is good, for, to have clear notions upon

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[1] [Dr. John Campbell died about two years before this conversation took place; Dec. 10, 1776.—M.]

[2] What my friend meant by these words concerning the amiable philosopher of Salisbury, I am at a loss to understand. A friend suggests that Johnson thought his *manner* as a writer affected, while, at the same time, the *matter* did not compensate for that fault. In short, that he meant to make a remark quite different from that which a *celebrated gentleman* made on a very eminent physician: 'He is a coxcomb, but a *satisfactory coxcomb*.'

[The *celebrated gentleman* here alluded to, was the late Right Honourable William Gerard Hamilton.—M.]

any subject, we must have recourse to analytic arrangement.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is what everybody does, whether they will or no. But sometimes things may be made darker by definition. I see a *cow*. I define her, *Animal quadrupes ruminans cornutum*. But a goat ruminates, and a cow may have no horns. *Cow* is plainer.' BOSWELL: 'I think Dr. Franklin's definition of *Man* a good one—"a tool-making animal."' JOHNSON: 'But many a man never made a tool; and suppose a man without arms, he could not make a tool.'

Talking of drinking wine, he said, 'I did not leave off wine because I could not bear it! I have drunk three bottles of port without being the worse for it. University College has witnessed this.' BOSWELL: 'Why then, sir, did you leave it off?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, because it is so much better for a man to be sure that he is never to be intoxicated, never to lose the power over himself. I shall not begin to drink wine till I grow old and want it.' BOSWELL: 'I think, sir, you once said to me, that not to drink wine was a great deduction from life.' JOHNSON: 'It is a diminution of pleasure, to be sure; but I do not say a diminution of happiness. There is more happiness in being rational.' BOSWELL: 'But if we could have pleasure always, should not we be happy? The greatest part of men would compound for pleasure.' JOHNSON: 'Supposing we could have pleasure always, an intellectual man would not compound for it. The greatest part of men would compound, because the greatest part of men are gross.' BOSWELL: 'I allow there may be greater pleasure than from wine. I have had more pleasure from your conversation. I have

indeed; I assure you I have.' JOHNSON: 'When we talk of pleasure, we mean sensual pleasure. When a man says he had pleasure with a woman, he does not mean conversation, but something of a very different nature. Philosophers tell you that pleasure is *contrary* to happiness. Gross men prefer animal pleasure. So there are men who have preferred living among savages. Now what a wretch must he be who is content with such conversation as can be had among savages! You may remember an officer at Fort Augustus, who had served in America, told us of a woman whom they were obliged to *bind*, in order to get her back from savage life.' BOSWELL: 'She must have been an animal, a beast.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, she was a speaking cat.'

I mentioned to him that I had become very weary in a company where I heard not a single intellectual sentence, except that 'a man who had been settled ten years in Minorca was become a much inferior man to what he was in London, because a man's mind grows narrow in a narrow place.' JOHNSON: 'A man's mind grows narrow in a narrow place, whose mind is enlarged only because he has lived in a large place; but what is got by books and thinking is preserved in a narrow place as well as in a large place. A man cannot know modes of life as well in Minorca as in London; but he may study mathematics as well in Minorca.' BOSWELL: 'I don't know, sir: if you had remained ten years in the Isle of Coll, you would not have been the man you now are.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, if I had been there from fifteen to twenty-five; but not if from twenty-five to thirty-five.' BOSWELL: 'I own, sir, the spirits which I have in London make me do

everything with more readiness and vigour. I can talk twice as much in London as anywhere else.'

Of Goldsmith, he said, 'He was not an agreeable companion, for he talked always for fame. A man who does so never can be pleasing. The man who talks to unburden his mind is the man to delight you. An eminent friend of ours is not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would otherwise make him, because he talks partly from ostentation.'

Soon after our arrival at Thrale's, I heard one of the maids calling eagerly on another, to go to Dr. Johnson. I wondered what this could mean. I afterwards learned that it was to give her a Bible which he had brought from London as a present to her.

He was for a considerable time occupied in reading *Memoires de Fontenelle*, leaning and swinging upon a low gate into the court, without his hat.

I looked into Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man*, and mentioned to Dr. Johnson his censure of Charles the Fifth, for celebrating his funeral obsequies in his lifetime, which I told him I had been used to think a solemn and affecting act. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a man may dispose his mind to think so of that act of Charles; but it is so liable to ridicule that if one man out of ten thousand laughs at it, he'll make the other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine laugh too.' I could not agree with him in this.

Sir John Pringle had expressed a wish that I would ask Dr. Johnson's opinion what were the best English sermons for style. I took an opportunity to-day of mentioning several to him. 'Atterbury?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, one of the best.' BOSWELL: 'Tillotson?'

JOHNSON: 'Why, not now. I should not advise a preacher at this day to imitate Tillotson's style; though I don't know; I should be cautious of objecting to what has been applauded by so many suffrages South is one of the best, if you except his peculiarities, and his violence, and sometimes coarseness of language. Seed[1] has a very fine style; but he is not very theological. Jortin's sermons are very elegant. Sherlock's style, too, is very elegant, though he has not made it his principal study. And you may add Smallridge. All the latter preachers have a good style. Indeed, nobody now talks much of style: everybody composes pretty well. There are no such inharmonious periods as there were a hundred years ago. I should recommend Dr. Clarke's sermons, were he orthodox. However, it is pretty well known *where* he is not orthodox, which was upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as to which he is a condemned heretic: so one is aware of it.' BOSWELL: 'I like Ogden's Sermons on Prayer very much, both for neatness of style and subtilty of reasoning.' JOHNSON: 'I should like to read all that Ogden has written.'[2] BOSWELL: 'What I wish to know is, what sermons afford the best specimen of English pulpit eloquence.' JOHNSON: 'We have no sermons addressed to the passions that are good for anything; if you mean that kind of eloquence.' A CLERGYMAN (whose name I do not recollect): 'Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to

[1] Jeremiah Seed was long curator to Dr. Waterland at Twickenham. His works, in four volumes, are full of antithesis and point.—A. B.]

[2] Dr. Hill maliciously points out that when Johnson and Boswell were touring in the Hebrides, the latter placed Ogden's works within Johnson's reach, but no inclination to peruse them was exhibited.—A. B.]

the passions?' JOHNSON: 'They were nothing, sir, be they addressed to what they may.'

At dinner Mrs. Thrale expressed a wish to go and see Scotland. JOHNSON: 'Seeing Scotland, madam, is only seeing a worse England. It is seeing the flower gradually fade away to the naked stalk. Seeing the Hebrides, indeed, is seeing quite a different scene.'

Our poor friend, Mr. Thomas Davies, was soon to have a benefit at Drury Lane Theatre, as some relief to his unfortunate circumstances. We were all warmly interested for his success, and had contributed to it. However, we thought there was no harm in having our joke, when he could not be hurt by it. I proposed that he should be brought on to speak a prologue upon the occasion; and I began to mutter fragments of what it might be: as, that when now grown *old*, he was obliged to cry, 'Poor Tom's *a-cold*';—that he owned he had been driven from the stage by a Churchill, but that was no disgrace, for a Churchill had beat the French—that he had been satirised as 'mouthing a sentence as curs mouth a bone,' but he was now glad of a bone to pick. 'Nay (said Johnson), I would have him to say,

'"Mad Tom is come to see the world again."'

He and I returned to town in the evening. Upon the road I endeavoured to maintain in argument that a landed gentleman is not under any obligation to reside upon his estate; and that by living in London he does no injury to his country. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, he does no injury to his country in general, because the money which he draws from it gets back

again in circulation; but to his particular district, his particular parish, he does an injury. All that he has to give away is not given to those who have the first claim to it. And though I have said that the money circulates back, it is a long time before that happens. Then, sir, a man of family and estate ought to consider himself as having the charge of a district, over which he is to diffuse civility and happinesss.'[1]

Next day I found him at home in the morning. He praised Delany's *Observations on Swift*; said that his book and Lord Orrery's might both be true, though one viewed Swift more, and the other less, favourably; and that, between both, we might have a complete notion of Swift.

Talking of a man's resolving to deny himself the use of wine, from moral and religious considerations, he said, 'He must not doubt about it. When one doubts as to pleasure, we know what will be the conclusion. I now no more think of drinking wine, than a horse does. The wine upon the table is no more for me than for the dog that is under the table.'

On Thursday, April 9, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the Bishop of St. Asaph (Dr. Shipley), Mr. Allan Ramsay, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Cambridge, and Mr. Langton. Mr. Ramsay had lately returned from Italy, and entertained us with his observations upon Horace's villa, which he had examined with great care. I relished this much, as it brought fresh into my mind what I had viewed with great pleasure thirteen years before. The Bishop, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Cambridge, joined with Mr. Ramsay

[1] [See, however, pp. 179-180, where his decision on this subject is more favourable to the absentee.—M.]

in recollecting the various lines in Horace relating to the subject.

Horace's journey to Brundusium being mentioned, Johnson observed, that the brook which he describes is to be seen now, exactly as at that time; and that he had often wondered how it happened, that small brooks, such as this, kept the same situation for ages, notwithstanding earthquakes, by which even mountains have been changed, and agriculture, which produces such a variation upon the surface of the earth. CAMBRIDGE: 'A Spanish writer has this thought in a poetical conceit. After observing that most of the solid structures of Rome are totally perished, while the Tiber remains the same, he adds,

'"Lo que erà Firme huió solamente,
Lo Fugitivo permanece y dura."'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, that is taken from *Janus Vitalis*:

'"immota labescunt;
Et quæ perpetuo sunt agitata manent."'

The Bishop said, it appeared from Horace's writings that he was a cheerful, contented man. JOHNSON: 'We have no reason to believe that, my Lord. Are we to think Pope was happy, because he says so in his writings? We see in his writings what he wished the state of his mind to appear. Dr. Young, who pined for preferment, talks with contempt of it in his writings, and affects to despise everything that he did not despise.' BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH: 'He was like other chaplains, looking for vacancies: but that is not peculiar to the clergy. I remember when I was with the army, after the battle of Lafeldt, the officers seriously grumbled that no general was killed.'

CAMBRIDGE: 'We may believe Horace more, when he says,

'"Romæ Tibur amem ventosus, Tibure Romam";[1]

than when he boasts of his consistency:

'"Me constare mihi scis, et discedere tristem,
Quandocunque trahunt invisa negotia Romam."'[2]

BOSWELL: 'How hard is it that man can never be at rest.' RAMSAY: 'It is not in his nature to be at rest. When he is at rest, he is in the worst state that he can be in; for he has nothing to agitate him. He is then like the man in the Irish song,

'"There lived a young man in Ballinacrazy,
Who wanted a wife for to make him unaisy."'

Goldsmith being mentioned, Johnson observed that it was long before his merit came to be acknowledged: that he once complained to him, in ludicrous terms of distress, 'Whenever I write anything, the public *make a point* to know nothing about it': but that his *Traveller*[3] brought him into high reputation. LANGTON: 'There is not one bad line in that poem; no one of Dryden's careless verses.' SIR JOSHUA: 'I was glad to hear Charles Fox say, it was one of the finest poems in the English language.' LANGTON: 'Why were you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before.' JOHNSON: 'No; the merit of the *Traveller* is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it.' SIR JOSHUA: 'But his friends may suspect they had too great a partiality for him.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, the partiality of his friends was always against him. It was with difficulty we could give him a

[1] *Epist.* l. 1. ep. viii. 12.
[2] *Ibid.* l. 1, ep. xiv. 16.
[3] [First published in 1765.—M.]

hearing. Goldsmith had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry too when catched in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. I remember Chamier,[1] after talking with him some time, said, "Well, I do believe he wrote this poem himself: and, let me tell you, that is believing a great deal." Chamier once asked him, what he meant by *slow*, the last word in the first line of the *Traveller*,

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,"—

Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who would say something without consideration, answered, "Yes." I was sitting by, and said, "No, sir; you do not mean tardiness of locomotion; you mean, that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude." Chamier believed then that I had written the line, as much as if he had seen me write it. Goldsmith, however, was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived, would have deserved it better. He had indeed been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another, and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books.'

We talked of living in the country. JOHNSON: 'No wise man will go to live in the country, unless he has something to do which can be better done in the

[1] [Antony Chamier, Esq., a member of the Literary Club, and Under-Secretary of State. He died Oct. 12, 1780.—M.]

country. For instance: if he is to shut himself up for a year to study a science, it is better to look out to the fields, than to an opposite wall. Then if a man walks out in the country, there is nobody to keep him from walking in again; but if a man walks out in London, he is not sure when he shall walk in again. A great city is, to be sure, the school for studying life; and "The proper study of mankind is man," as Pope observes.' BOSWELL: 'I fancy London is the best place for society; though I have heard that the very first society of Paris is still beyond anything that we have here.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I question if in Paris such a company as is sitting round this table could be got together in less than half a year. They talk in France of the felicity of men and women living together: the truth is, that there the men are not higher than the women, they know no more than the women do, and they are not held down in their conversation by the presence of women.' RAMSAY: 'Literature is upon the growth, it is in its spring in France: here it rather *passée*.' JOHNSON: 'Literature was in France long before we had it. Paris was the second city for the revival of letters: Italy had it first, to be sure. What have we done for literature, equal to what was done by Stephanie and others in France? Our literature came to us through France. Caxton printed only two books, Chaucer and Gower, that were not translations from the French; and Chaucer, we know, took much from the Italians. No, sir, if literature be in its spring in France, it is a second spring; it is after a winter. We are now before the French in literature; but we had it long after them in England: any man who wears a sword and a powdered

wig is ashamed to be illiterate. I believe it is not so in France. Yet there is, probably, a great deal of learning in France, because they have such a number of religious establishments; so many men who have nothing else to do but to study. I do not know this; but I take it upon the common principles of chance. Where there are many shooters, some will hit.'

We talked of old age. Johnson (now in his seventieth year), said, 'It is a man's own fault, it is from want of use, if his mind grows torpid in old age.' The Bishop asked, if an old man does not lose faster than he gets. JOHNSON: 'I think not, my Lord, if he exerts himself.' One of the company rashly observed that he thought it was happy for an old man that insensibility comes upon him. JOHNSON (with a noble elevation and disdain): 'No, sir, I should never be happy by being less rational.' BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH: 'Your wish then, sir, is, γηράσκειν διδασκόμενος.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, my Lord.' His Lordship mentioned a charitable establishment in Wales, where people were maintained, and supplied with everything, upon the condition of their contributing the weekly produce of their labour; and he said they grew quite torpid for want of property. JOHNSON: 'They have no object for hope. Their condition cannot be better. It is rowing without a port.'

One of the company asked him the meaning of the expression in Juvenal, *unius lacertæ*. JOHNSON: 'I think it clear enough; as much ground as one may have a chance to find a lizard upon.'

Commentators have differed as to the exact meaning of the expression by which the poet intended to enforce the sentiment contained in the passage where

these words occur. It is enough that they mean to denote even a very small possession, provided it be a man's own :

> 'Est aliquid, quocunque loco, quocunque recessu,
> Unius sese dominum fecisse lacertæ.'[1]

This season, there was a whimsical fashion in the newspapers of applying Shakespeare's words to describe living persons well known in the world ; which was done under the title of '*Modern Characters from Shakespeare*,' many of which were admirably adapted. The fancy took so much, that they were afterwards collected into a pamphlet. Somebody said to Johnson, across the table, that he had not been in those characters. 'Yes (said he), I have. I should have been sorry to be left out.' He then repeated what had been applied to him,

> 'You must borrow me Garagantua's mouth.'

Miss Reynolds not perceiving at once the meaning of this, he was obliged to explain it to her, which had something of an awkward and ludicrous effect. 'Why, madam, it has a reference to me, as using big words, which require the mouth of a giant to pronounce them. Garagantua is the name of a giant in Rabelais.' Boswell : 'But, sir, there is another amongst them for you :

> '"He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for his power to thunder."'

Johnson : 'There is nothing marked in that. No, sir, Garagantua is the best.' Notwithstanding this

[1] *Sat.* iii. 230.

ease and good humour, when I, a little while afterwards, repeated his sarcasm on Kenrick,[1] which was received with applause, he asked, '*Who* said that?' and on my suddenly answering *Garagantua*, he looked serious, which was a sufficient indication that he did not wish it to be kept up.

When we went to the drawing-room, there was a rich assemblage. Besides the company who had been at dinner, there were Mr. Garrick, Mr. Harris of Salisbury, Dr. Percy, Dr. Burney, the Honourable Mrs. Cholmondeley, Miss Hannah More, etc. etc.

After wandering about in a kind of pleasing distraction for some time, I got into a corner with Johnson, Garrick, and Harris. GARRICK (to Harris): 'Pray, sir, have you read Potter's *Æschylus*?' HARRIS: 'Yes; and think it pretty.' GARRICK (to Johnson): 'And what think you, sir, of it?' JOHNSON: 'I thought what I read of it *verbiage*; but upon Mr. Harris's recommendation I will read a play. (To Mr. Harris.) Don't prescribe two.' Mr. Harris suggested one, I do not remember which. JOHNSON: 'We must try its effect as an English poem; that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation: translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original.' I mentioned the vulgar saying, that Pope's Homer was not a good representation of the original. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is the greatest work of the kind that has ever been produced.' BOSWELL: 'The truth is, it is impossible perfectly to translate poetry. In a different language it may be the same tune, but it has not the same tone. Homer plays it on a bassoon; Pope on

[1] See vol. ii. p. 157.

a flageolet.' HARRIS: 'I think heroic poetry is best in blank verse; yet it appears that rhyme is essential to English poetry, from our deficiency in metrical quantities. In my opinion, the chief excellence of our language is numerous prose.' JOHNSON: Sir William Temple was the first writer who gave cadence to English prose.[1] Before his time they were careless of arrangement, and did not mind whether a sentence ended with an important word or an insignificant word, or with what part of speech it was concluded.' Mr. Langton, who now had joined us, commended Clarendon. JOHNSON: 'He is objected to for his parentheses, his involved clauses, and his want of harmony. But he is supported by his matter. It is, indeed, owing to a plethory of matter that his style is so faulty: every *substance* (smiling to Mr. Harris), has so many *accidents*. To be distinct, we must talk *analytically*. If we analyse language, we must speak of it grammati-

[1] [The author, in vol. i. p. 176, says, that Johnson once told him, 'that he had formed his style upon that of Sir William Temple, and upon Chambers's Proposal for his *Dictionary*. He certainly was mistaken; or, if he imagined at first that he was imitating Temple, he was very unsuccessful, for nothing can be more unlike than the simplicity of Temple and the richness of Johnson.'

This observation, on the first view, seems perfectly just; but on a closer examination, it will, I think, appear to have been founded on a misapprehension. Mr. Boswell understood Johnson too literally. He did not, I conceive, mean that he endeavoured to imitate Temple's style in all its parts; but that he formed his style on him and Chambers (perhaps the paper published in 1737, relative to his second edition, entitled 'Considerations,' etc.), taking from each what was most worthy of imitation. The passage before us, I think, shows that he learned from Temple to modulate his periods, and, *in that respect only*, made him his pattern. In this view of the subject there is no difficulty. He might learn from Chambers, compactness, strength, and precision (in opposition to the laxity of style which had long prevailed); from Sir Thomas Browne (who was also certainly one of his archetypes), *pondera verborum*, vigour and energy of expression; and from Temple, harmonious arrangement, the due collocation of words, and the other arts and graces of composition here enumerated; and yet, after all, his style might bear no striking resemblance to that of any of these writers, though it had profited by each.—M.]

cally; if we analyse argument, we must speak of it logically.' GARRICK: 'Of all the translations that ever were attempted, I think Elphinston's *Martial* the most extraordinary. He consulted me upon it, who am a little of an epigrammatist myself, you know. I told him freely, "You don't seem to have that turn." I asked him if he was serious; and finding he was, I advised him against publishing. Why, his translation is more difficult to understand than the original. I thought him a man of some talents; but he seems crazy in this.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you have done what I had not courage to do. But he did not ask my advice, and I did not force it upon him, to make him angry with me.' GARRICK: 'But as a friend, sir.' JOHNSON: 'Why, such a friend as I am with him—no.' GARRICK: 'But if you see a friend going to tumble over a precipice?' JOHNSON: 'That is an extravagant case, sir. You are sure a friend will thank you for hindering him from tumbling over a precipice; but, in the other case, I should hurt his vanity and do him no good. He would not take my advice. His brother-in-law, Strahan, sent him a subscription of £50, and said he would send him £50 more, if he would not publish.' GARRICK: 'What! eh! is Strahan a good judge of an epigram? Is not he rather an *obtuse* man, eh?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, he may not be a judge of an epigram: but you see he is a judge of what is *not* an epigram.' BOSWELL: 'It is easy for you, Mr. Garrick, to talk to an author as you talked to Elphinston; you, who have been so long the manager of a theatre, rejecting the plays of poor authors. You are an old judge, who have often pronounced sentence of death. You are a practised surgeon, who have often

amputated limbs; and though this may have been for the good of your patients, they cannot like you.' Those who have undergone a dreadful operation, are not very fond of seeing the operator again.' GARRICK: 'Yes, I know enough of that. There was a reverend gentleman (Mr. Hawkins), who wrote a tragedy, the SIEGE of something,[1] which I refused.' HARRIS: 'So, the siege was raised.' JOHNSON: 'Ay, he came to me and complained; and told me that Garrick said his play was wrong in the *concoction*. Now, what is the concoction of a play?' (Here Garrick started, and twisted himself, and seemed sorely vexed; for Johnson told me, he believed the story was true.) GARRICK: 'I—I—I—said, *first* concoction.'[2] JOHNSON (smiling): 'Well, he left out *first*. And Rich, he said, refused him *in false English*: he could show it under his hand.' GARRICK: 'He wrote to me in violent wrath, for having refused his play: "Sir, this is growing a very serious and terrible affair. I am resolved to publish my play. I will appeal to the world; and how will your judgment appear!" I answered, "Sir, notwithstanding all the seriousness, and all the terrors, I have no objection to your publishing your play; and as you live at a great distance (Devonshire, I believe), if you will send it to me, I will convey it to the press." I never heard more of it, ha! ha! ha!'

On Friday, April 10, I found Johnson at home in the morning. We resumed the conversation of yester-

[1] It was called *The Siege of Aleppo*. Mr. Hawkins, the author of it, was formerly professor of poetry at Oxford. It is printed in his *Miscellanies*, 3 vols. octavo.

[2] [Garrick had high authority for this expression. Dryden uses it in one of his critical essays.—M.]

day. He put me in mind of some of it which had escaped my memory, and enabled me to record it more perfectly than I otherwise could have done. He was much pleased with my paying so great attention to his recommendation in 1763, the period when our acquaintance began, that I should keep a journal; and I could perceive he was secretly pleased to find so much of the fruit of his mind preserved; and as he had been used to imagine and say that he always laboured when he said a good thing,—it delighted him, on a review, to find that his conversation teemed with point and imagery.

I said to him, 'You were yesterday, sir, in remarkably good humour; but there was nothing to offend you, nothing to produce irritation or violence. There was no bold offender. There was not one capital conviction. It was a maiden assize. You had on your white gloves.'

He found fault with our friend Langton for having been too silent. 'Sir (said I), you will recollect that he very properly took up Sir Joshua for being glad that Charles Fox had praised Goldsmith's *Traveller*, and you joined him.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, I knocked Fox on the head without ceremony. Reynolds is too much under Fox and Burke at present. He is under the *Fox star* and the *Irish constellation*. He is always under some planet.' BOSWELL: 'There is no Fox star.' JOHNSON: 'But there is a dog star.' BOSWELL: 'They say, indeed, a fox and a dog are the same animal.'

I reminded him of a gentleman who, Mrs. Cholmondeley said, was first talkative from affectation, and then silent from the same cause; that he first thought,

'I shall be celebrated as the liveliest man in every company'; and then, all at once, 'O! it is much more respectable to be grave and look wise.' 'He has reversed the Pythagorean discipline, by being first talkative, and then silent. He reverses the course of Nature too; he was first the gay butterfly, and then the creeping worm.' Johnson laughed loud and long at this expansion and illustration of what he himself had told me.

We dined together with Mr. Scott (now Sir William Scott, his Majesty's Advocate-General),[1] at his chambers in the Temple, nobody else there. The company being small, Johnson was not in such spirits as he had been the preceding day, and for a considerable time little was said. At last he burst forth: 'Subordination is sadly broken down in this age. No man, now, has the same authority which his father had,—except a gaoler. No master has it over his servants: it is diminished in our colleges; nay, in our grammar-schools.' BOSWELL: 'What is the cause of this, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, the coming in of the Scotch' (laughing sarcastically). BOSWELL: 'That is to say, things have been turned topsy-turvy. But your serious cause.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, there are many causes, the chief of which is, I think, the great increase of money. No man now depends upon the lord of a manor, when he can send to another country, and fetch provisions. The shoe-black at the entry of my court does not depend on me. I can deprive him but of a penny a day, which he hopes somebody else will bring him; and that penny I must

[1] [Now (1804) Judge of the Court of Admiralty, and Master of the Faculties.—M.]

carry to another shoe-black, so the trade suffers nothing. I have explained in my *Journey to the Hebrides*, how gold and silver destroy feudal subordination. But, besides, there is a general relaxation of reverence. No son now depends upon his father, as in former times. Paternity used to be considered as of itself a great thing, which had a right to many claims. That is, in general, reduced to very small bounds. My hope is, that as anarchy produces tyranny, this extreme relaxation will produce *freni strictio*.'

Talking of fame, for which there is so great a desire, I observed, how little there is of it in reality, compared with the other objects of human attention. 'Let every man recollect, and he will be sensible how small a part of his time is employed in talking or thinking of Shakespeare, Voltaire, or any of the most celebrated men that have ever lived, or are now supposed to occupy the attention and admiration of the world. Let this be extracted and compressed; into what a narrow space will it go!' I then slily introduced Mr. Garrick's fame, and his assuming the airs of a great man. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is wonderful how *little* Garrick assumes. No, sir, Garrick *fortunam reverenter habet*. Consider, sir, celebrated men, such as you have mentioned, have had their applause at a distance; but Garrick had it dashed in his face, sounded in his ears, and went home every night with the plaudits of a thousand in his *cranium*. Then, sir, Garrick did not *find*, but *made* his way to the tables, the levees, and almost the bed-chambers of the great. Then, sir, Garrick had under him a numerous body of people; who, from fear of his power and hopes of his favour, and admira-

tion of his talents, were constantly submissive to him. And here is a man who has advanced the dignity of his profession. Garrick has made a player a higher character.' SCOTT: 'And he is a very sprightly writer too.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; and all this supported by great wealth of his own acquisition. If all this had happened to me I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me to knock down everybody that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber or Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon. Yet Garrick speaks to *us*' (smiling). BOSWELL: 'And Garrick is a very good man, a charitable man.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed: but he has shown that money is not his first object.' BOSWELL: 'Yet Foote used to say of him that he walked out with an intention to do a generous action; but turning the corner of a street he met with the ghost of a halfpenny, which frightened him.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, that is very true too; for I never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty to-day what he will do to-morrow, than Garrick; it depends so much on his humour at the time.' SCOTT: 'I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving.' JOHNSON: 'With his domestic saving we have nothing to do I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong.[1] He had then begun to feel

[1] When Johnson told this little anecdote to Sir Joshua Reynolds, he mentioned a circumstance which he omitted to-day:—'Why (said Garrick), it is as red as blood.'

money in his purse, and did not know when he should have enough of it.'

On the subject of wealth, the proper use of it, and the effects of that art which is called economy, he observed, 'It is wonderful to think how men of very large estates not only spend their yearly incomes, but are often actually in want of money. It is clear they have not value for what they spend. Lord Shelburne told me that a man of high rank, who looks into his own affairs, may have all that he ought to have, all that can be of any use, or appear with any advantage, for £5000 a year. Therefore a great proportion must go in waste; and, indeed, this is the case with most people, whatever their fortune is.' BOSWELL: 'I have no doubt, sir, of this. But how is it? What is waste?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, breaking bottles, and a thousand other things. Waste cannot be accurately told, though we are sensible how destructive it is. Economy on the one hand, by which a certain income is made to maintain a man genteely, and waste on the other, by which, on the same income, another man lives shabbily, cannot be defined. It is a very nice thing; as one man wears his coat out much sooner than another, we cannot tell how.'

We talked of war. JOHNSON: 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.' BOSWELL: 'Lord Mansfield does not.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of general officers and admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table.' BOSWELL: 'No; he'd think he could *try* them all.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, if he could catch them: but they'd try him much sooner. No,

sir; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, "Follow me, and hear a lecture in philosophy"; and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, "Follow me, and dethrone the Czar"; a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal: yet it is strange. As to the sailor, when you look down from the quarter-deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery: such crowding, such filth, such stench!' BOSWELL: 'Yet sailors are happy.' JOHNSON: 'They are happy as brutes are happy, with a piece of fresh meat,—with the grossest sensuality. But, sir, the profession of soldiers and sailors has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverence those who have got over fear, which is so general a weakness. SCOTT: 'But is not courage mechanical, and to be acquired?' JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir, in a collective sense. Soldiers consider themselves only as part of a great machine.' SCOTT: 'We find people fond of being sailors.' JOHNSON: 'I cannot account for that any more than I can account for other strange perversions of imagination.'

His abhorrence of the profession of a sailor was uniformly violent; but in conversation he always exalted the profession of a soldier. And yet I have, in my large and various collection of his writings, a letter to an eminent friend, in which he expresses himself thus: 'My godson called on me lately. He is weary, and rationally weary of a military life. If you can place him in some other state, I think you may increase his happiness, and secure his virtue. A soldier's time is passed in distress and danger, or in idleness and corruption.' Such was his cool reflection

in his study; but whenever he was warmed and animated by the presence of company, he, like other philosophers, whose minds are impregnated with poetical fancy, caught the common enthusiasm for splendid renown.

He talked of Mr. Charles Fox, of whose abilities he thought highly, but observed that he did not talk much at our Club. I have heard Mr. Gibbon remark, 'that Mr. Fox could not be afraid of Dr. Johnson; yet he certainly was very shy of saying anything in Dr. Johnson's presence.' Mr. Scott now quoted what was said of Alcibiades by a Greek poet, to which Johnson assented.[1]

He told us that he had given Mrs. Montague a catalogue of all Daniel Defoe's works of imagination; most, if not all of which, as well as of his other works, he now enumerated, allowing a considerable share of merit to a man, who, bred a tradesman, had written so variously and so well. Indeed, his *Robinson Crusoe* is enough of itself to establish his reputation.

He expressed great indignation at the imposture of

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[1] [Wishing to discover the ancient observation here referred to, I applied to Sir William Scott on the subject, but he had no recollection of it. My old and very learned friend, Dr. Michael Kearney, formerly senior fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and now Archdeacon of Raphoe in Ireland, has, however, most happily elucidated this passage. He remarks to me, that 'Mr. Boswell's memory must here have deceived him; and that Mr. Scott's observation must have been, that "Mr. Fox, in the instance mentioned, might be considered as the *reverse* of *Phœax*, of whom, as Plutarch relates in the *Life of Alcibiades*, Eupolis the tragedian said, ***It is true he can*** talk, ***and yet he is no*** speaker."'

If this discovery had been made by a scholiast on an ancient author, with what ardour and exuberant praise would Bentley or Taylor have spoken of it! Sir William Scott, to whom I communicated Dr. Kearney's remark, is perfectly satisfied that it is correct. For the other observations, signed K, we are indebted to the same gentleman. Every classical reader will lament that they are not more numerous.—M.]

the Cock Lane ghost, and related, with much satisfaction, how he had assisted in detecting the cheat, and had published an account of it in the newspapers. Upon this subject I incautiously offended him, by pressing him with too many questions, and he showed his displeasure: I apologised, saying that 'I asked questions in order to be instructed and entertained; I repaired eagerly to the fountain; but that the moment he gave me a hint, the moment he put a lock upon the well, I desisted.' 'But, sir (said he), that is forcing one to do a disagreeable thing': and he continued to rate me. 'Nay, sir (said I), when you have put a lock upon the well, so that I can no longer drink, do not make the fountain of your wit play upon me and wet me.'

He sometimes could not bear being teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman asked so many, as, 'What did you do, sir?'—'What did you say, sir?' that he at last grew enraged, and said, 'I will not be put to the *question*. Don't you consider, sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what* and *why*; what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?' The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, 'Why, sir, you are so good, that I venture to trouble you.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill*.'

Talking of the Justitia hulk at Woolwich, in which criminals were punished, by being confined to labour, he said, 'I do not see that they are punished by this: they must have worked equally, had they never been guilty of stealing. They now only work; so, after

all, they have gained; what they stole is clear gain to them; the confinement is nothing. Every man who works is confined: the smith to his shop, the tailor to his garret.' BOSWELL: 'And Lord Mansfield to his Court.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir. You know the notion of confinement may be extended, as in the song, 'Every island is a prison.' There is, in Dodsley's collection, a copy of verses to the author of that song.'

Smith's Latin verses on Pococke, the great traveller,[1] were mentioned. He repeated some of them, and said they were Smith's best verses.

He talked with an uncommon animation of travelling into distant countries; that the mind was enlarged by it, and that an acquisition of dignity of character was derived from it. He expressed a particular enthusiasm with respect to visiting the wall of China. I catched it for the moment, and said I really believed I should go and see the wall of China had I not children, of whom it was my duty to take care. 'Sir (said he), by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to view the wall of China:—I am serious, sir.'

When we had left Mr. Scott's he said, 'Will you go home with me?' 'Sir (said I), it is late; but I 'll go with you for three minutes.' JOHNSON: 'Or *four*.'

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[1] [Smith's verses are on Edward Pococke, the great Oriental linguist: he travelled, it is true, but Dr. Richard Pococke, late Bishop of Ossory, who published *Travels through the East*, is usually called *the great traveller*.—K.]

We went to Mrs. Williams's room, where we found Mr. Allen the printer, who was the landlord of his house in Bolt Court, a worthy, obliging man, and his very old acquaintance; and what was exceedingly amusing, though he was of a very diminutive size, he used, even in Johnson's presence, to imitate the stately periods and slow and solemn utterance of the great man. I this evening boasted, that although I did not write what is called stenography, or shorthand, in appropriated characters devised for the purpose, I had a method of my own of writing half words, and leaving out some altogether, so as yet to keep the substance and language of any discourse which I had heard so much in view, that I could give it very completely soon after I had taken it down. He defied me, as he had once defied an actual shorthand writer; and he made the experiment by reading slowly and distinctly a part of Robertson's *History of America*, while I endeavoured to write it in my way of taking notes. It was found that I had it very imperfectly; the conclusion from which was, that its excellence was principally owing to a studied arrangement of words, which could not be varied or abridged without an essential injury.

On Sunday, April 12, I found him at home before dinner; Dr. Dodd's poem, entitled *Thoughts in Prison*, was lying upon the table. This appearing to me an extraordinary effort by a man who was in Newgate for a capital crime, I was desirous to hear Johnson's opinion of it: to my surprise he told me he had not read a line of it. I took up the book, and read a passage to him. JOHNSON: 'Pretty well, if you are previously disposed to like them.' I read another

passage, with which he was better pleased. He then took the book into his own hands, and having looked at the prayer at the end of it, he said, 'What *evidence* is there that this was composed the night before he suffered? *I* do not believe it.' He then read aloud where he prays for the King, etc., and observed, 'Sir, do you think that a man, the night before he is to be hanged, cares for the succession of a royal family? Though, he *may* have composed this prayer then. A man who has been canting all his life, may cant to the last. And yet a man who has been refused a pardon after so much petitioning would hardly be praying thus fervently for the King.'

He and I, and Mrs. Williams, went to dine with the Reverend Dr. Percy. Talking of Goldsmith, Johnson said, he was very envious. I defended him, by observing that he owned it frankly upon all occasions. JOHNSON: 'Sir, you are enforcing the charge. He had so much envy that he could not conceal it. He was so full of it that he overflowed. He talked of it, to be sure, often enough. Now, sir, what a man avows, he is not ashamed to think; though many a man thinks what he is ashamed to avow. We are all envious naturally; but by checking envy, we get the better of it. So we are all thieves naturally; a child always tries to get at what it wants the nearest way; by good instruction and good habits this is cured, till a man has not even an inclination to seize what is another's; has no struggle with himself about it.'

And here I shall record a scene of too much heat between Dr. Johnson and Dr. Percy, which I should have suppressed, were it not that it gave occasion to

display the truly tender and benevolent heart of Johnson, who, as soon as he found a friend was at all hurt by anything which he had 'said in his wrath,' was not only prompt and desirous to be reconciled, but exerted himself to make ample reparation.

Books of travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly, as he did at Dunvegan, in the Isle of Skye.[1] Dr. Percy knowing himself to be the heir-male of the ancient Percies,[2] and having the warmest and most dutiful attachment to the noble house of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick Castle and the Duke's pleasure-grounds, especially as he thought meanly of his travels. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly. JOHNSON: 'Pennant, in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended; he has made you very angry.' PERCY: 'He has said the garden is trim, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks.'

[1] *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit., p. 221.

[2] See this accurately stated, and the descent of his family from the Earls of Northumberland clearly deduced, in the Reverend Dr. Nash's excellent *History of Worcestershire*, vol. ii. p. 318. The Doctor has subjoined a note, in which he says, 'The editor hath seen and carefully examined the proofs of all the particulars above-mentioned, now in the possession of the Reverend Thomas Percy.'

The same proofs I have also myself carefully examined, and have seen some additional proofs which have occurred since the Doctor's book was published; and both as a lawyer accustomed to the consideration of evidence, and as a genealogist versed in the study of pedigrees, I am fully satisfied. I cannot help observing, as a circumstance of no small moment, that in tracing the Bishop of Dromore's genealogy, essential aid was given by the late Elizabeth, Duchess of Northumberland, heiress of that illustrious house; a lady not only of high dignity of spirit, such as became her noble blood, but of excellent understanding and lively talents. With a fair pride I can boast of the honour of her Grace's correspondence, specimens of which adorn my archives.

JOHNSON: 'According to your own account, sir, Pennant is right. It *is* trim. Here is grass cut close and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast-beef and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees.' PERCY: 'He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late.' JOHNSON: 'That, sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history; that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the park or at Islington.' PERCY: 'Pennant does not describe well: a carrier who goes along the side of Loch Lomond would describe it better.' JOHNSON: 'I think he describes very well.' PERCY: 'I travelled after him.' JOHNSON: 'And *I* travelled after him.' PERCY: 'But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do.' I wondered at Dr. Percy's venturing thus. Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time; but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant. JOHNSON (pointedly): 'This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find everything in Northumberland.' PERCY (feeling the stroke): 'Sir, you may be as rude as you please.' JOHNSON: 'Hold sir! Don't talk of rudeness;

remember, sir, you told me (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent) I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please.' PERCY: 'Upon my honour, sir, I did not mean to be uncivil.' JOHNSON: 'I cannot say so, sir; for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil.' Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place. JOHNSON: 'My dear sir, I am willing you shall *hang* Pennant.' PERCY (resuming the former subject): 'Pennant complains that the helmet is not hung out to invite to the hall of hospitality.[1] Now I never heard that it was a custom to hang out a *helmet*.' JOHNSON: 'Hang him up, hang him up.' BOSWELL (humouring the joke): 'Hang out his skull instead of a helmet, and you may drink ale out of it in your hall of Odin, as he is your enemy; that will be truly ancient. *There* will be *Northern Antiquities*.[2] JOHNSON: 'He's a *Whig*, sir; a *sad dog* (smiling at his own violent expressions, merely for *political* difference of opinion). But he's the best traveller I ever read; he observes more things than any one else does.'

I could not help thinking that this was too high praise of a writer who had traversed a wide extent of

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[1] It certainly was a custom, as appears from the following passage in *Perceforest*, vol. iii. p. 108: 'Fasoient mettre au plus hault de leur hostel un *heaulme, en signe* que tous les gentils hommes et gentilles femmes entrassent hardiment en leur hostel comme en leur propre,' etc.—KEARNEY.

[The author's second son, Mr. James Boswell, late of Brasenose College, in Oxford, and now of the Inner Temple, had noticed this passage in *Perceforest*, and suggested to me the same remark.—M.]

[2] The title of a book translated by Dr. Percy.

country in such haste that he could put together only curt frittered fragments of his own, and afterwards procured supplemental intelligence from parochial ministers, and others not the best qualified or most impartial narrators, whose ungenerous prejudice against the house of Stuart glares in misrepresentation; a writer, who at best treats merely of superficial objects, and shows no philosophical investigation of character and manners, such as Johnson has exhibited in his masterly *Journey* over part of the same ground; and who, it should seem, from a desire of ingratiating himself with the Scotch, has flattered the people of North Britain so inordinately and with so little discrimination, that the judicious and candid amongst them must be disgusted, while they value more the plain, just, yet kindly report of Johnson.

Having impartially censured Mr. Pennant as a traveller in Scotland, let me allow him, from authorities much better than mine, his deserved place as an able zoologist: and let me also from my own understanding and feelings, acknowledge the merit of his *London*, which, though said not to be quite accurate in some particulars, is one of the most pleasing topographical performances that ever appeared in any language. Mr. Pennant, like his countrymen in general, has the true spirit of a *Gentleman*. As a proof of it, I shall quote from his *London* the passage in which he speaks of my illustrious friend:

'I must by no means omit *Bolt Court*, the long residence of Doctor Samuel Johnson, a man of the strongest natural

abilities, great learning, a most retentive memory, of the deepest and most unaffected piety and morality, mingled with those numerous weaknesses and prejudices which his friends have kindly taken care to draw from their dread abode.[1] I brought on myself his transient anger by observing that "in his tour in *Scotland*, he once had long and woful experience of oats being the food of men in *Scotland* as they were of horses in *England*." It was a national reflection unworthy of him, and I shot my bolt. In return he gave me a tender hug.[2] *Con amore* he also said of me, "*The dog is a Whig.*"[3] I admired the virtues of Lord Russell, and pitied his fall. I should have been a Whig at the Revolution. There have been periods since in which I should have been what I now am, a moderate Tory, a supporter, as far as my little influence extends, of a well-poised balance between the crown and people: but should the scale preponderate against the *salus populi*, that moment may it be said "*The* dog's a *Whig.*"'

We had a calm after the storm, stayed the evening and supped, and were pleasant and gay. But Dr. Percy told me he was very uneasy at what had passed; for there was a gentleman there who was acquainted with the Northumberland family, to whom he hoped to have appeared more respectable, by showing how intimate he was with Dr. Johnson, and who might now, on the contrary, go away with an opinion to his disadvantage. He begged I would mention this to Dr. Johnson, which I afterwards did. His observation upon it was, 'This comes of *stratagem*; had he told me that he wished to

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1 This is the common cant against faithful biography. Does the worthy gentleman mean that I, who was taught discrimination of character by Johnson, should have omitted his frailties, and, in short, have *bedaubed* him, as the worthy gentleman has bedaubed Scotland? —BOSWELL.

2 See Dr. Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*, p. 296; see his *Dictionary*, article *Oats*; and my *Voyage to the Hebrides*, first edit.—PENNANT.

3 Mr. Boswell's *Journal*, p. 386.—PENNANT.

appear to advantage before that gentleman, he should have been at the top of the house all the time.' He spoke of Dr. Percy in the handsomest manner. 'Then, sir (said I), may I be allowed to suggest a mode by which you may effectually counteract any unfavourable report of what passed? I will write a letter to you upon the subject of the unlucky contest of that day, and you will be kind enough to put in writing as an answer to that letter what you have now said, and as Lord Percy is to dine with us at General Paoli's soon, I will take an opportunity to read the correspondence in his Lordship's presence.' This friendly scheme was accordingly carried into execution without Dr. Percy's knowledge. Johnson's letter placed Dr. Percy's unquestionable merit in the fairest point of view: and I contrived that Lord Percy should hear the correspondence by introducing it at General Paoli's as an instance of Dr. Johnson's kind disposition towards one in whom his Lordship was interested. Thus every unfavourable impression was obviated, that could possibly have been made on those by whom he wished most to be regarded. I breakfasted the day after with him, and informed him of my scheme and its happy completion, for which he thanked me in the warmest terms, and was highly delighted with Dr. Johnson's letter in his praise, of which I gave him a copy. He said, 'I would rather have this than degrees from all the universities in Europe. It will be for me, and my children and grandchildren.' Dr. Johnson having afterwards asked me if I had given him a copy of it, and being told I had, was offended, and insisted that I should get it back, which I did. As, however, he did not desire me to destroy either the original or the copy, or forbid

me to let it be seen, I think myself at liberty to apply to it his general declaration to me concerning his own letters: 'That he did not choose they should be published in his lifetime; but had no objection to their appearing after his death.' I shall therefore insert this kindly correspondence, having faithfully narrated the circumstances accompanying it:—

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'My dear Sir,—I beg leave to address you in behalf of our friend Dr. Percy, who was much hurt by what you said to him that day we dined at his house;[1] when, in the course of the dispute as to Pennant's merit as a traveller, you told Percy that "he had the resentment of a narrow mind against Pennant, because he did not find everything in Northumberland." Percy is sensible that you did not mean to injure him; but he is vexed to think that your behaviour to him on that occasion may be interpreted as a proof that he is despised by you, which I know is not the case. I have told him that the charge of being narrow-minded was only as to the particular point in question; and that he had the merit of being a martyr to his noble family.

'Earl Percy is to dine with General Paoli next Friday; and I should be sincerely glad to have it in my power to satisfy his Lordship how well you think of Dr. Percy, who, I find, apprehends that your good opinion of him may be of very essential consequence: and who assures me that he has the highest respect and the warmest affection for you.

'I have only to add that my suggesting this occasion for the exercise of your candour and generosity is altogether unknown to Dr. Percy, and proceeds from my good-will towards him, and my persuasion that you will be happy to do him an essential kindness.—I am, more and more, my dear sir, your most faithful and affectionate humble servant,

'James Boswell.'

[1] Sunday, April 12, 1778.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Sir,—The debate between Dr. Percy and me is one of those foolish controversies which begin upon a question of which neither party cares how it is decided, and which is, nevertheless, continued to acrimony by the vanity with which every man resists confutation. Dr. Percy's warmth proceeded from a cause which, perhaps, does him more honour than he could have derived from juster criticism. His abhorrence of Pennant proceeded from his opinion that Pennant had wantonly and indecently censured his patron. His anger made him resolve that, for having been once wrong, he never should be right. Pennant has much in his notions that I do not like; but still I think him a very intelligent traveller. If Percy is really offended I am sorry; for he is a man whom I never knew to offend any one. He is a man very willing to learn and very able to teach; a man, out of whose company I never go without having learned something. It is sure that he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance. So much extension of mind, and so much minute accuracy of inquiry, if you survey your whole circle of acquaintance you will find so scarce, if you find it at all, that you will value Percy by comparison. Lord Hailes is somewhat like him: but Lord Hailes does not, perhaps, go beyond him in research; and I do not know that he equals him in elegance. Percy's attention to poetry has given grace and splendour to his studies of antiquity. A mere antiquarian is a rugged being.

'Upon the whole, you see that what I might say in sport or petulance to him is very consistent with full conviction of his merit.—I am, dear sir, your most, etc., Sam. Johnson.

'*April* 23, 1778.'

TO THE REV. DR. PERCY, NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE

'Dear Sir,—I wrote to Dr. Johnson on the subject of the *Pennantian* controversy; and have received from him an answer which will delight you. I read it yesterday to Dr. Robertson at the exhibition; and at dinner to Lord Percy, General Oglethorpe, etc., who dined with us at General

Paoli's; who was also a witness to the high *testimony* to your honour.

'General Paoli desires the favour of your company next Tuesday to dinner to meet Dr. Johnson. If I can, I will call on you to-day.—I am, with sincere regard, your most obedient humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.[1]

'*South Audley Street, April* 25.'

On Monday, April 13, I dined with Johnson at Mr. Langton's, where were Dr. Porteous, then Bishop of Chester, now of London, and Dr. Stinton. He was at first in a very silent mood. Before dinner he said nothing but 'Pretty Baby,' to one of the children. Langton said very well to me afterwards, that he could repeat Johnson's conversation before dinner, as Johnson had said that he could repeat a complete chapter of the *Natural History of Iceland*, from the Danish of Horrebow, the whole of which was exactly thus:

CHAP. LXXII. *Concerning Snakes.*

'There are no snakes to be met with throughout the whole island.'

At dinner we talked of another mode in the newspapers of giving modern characters in sentences from the classics, and of the passage—

'Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,
Insanientis dum sapientiæ
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum
Vela dare, atque iterare cursus
Cogor relictos,'[2]

[1] Though the Bishop of Dromore kindly answered the letters which I wrote to him relative to Dr. Johnson's early history: yet, in justice to him, I think it proper to add that the account of the foregoing conversation, and the subsequent transaction, as well as of some other conversations in which he is mentioned, has been given to the public without previous communication with his Lordship.

[2] Hor. *Carm.* Lib. i. Od. 34.

being well applied to Soame Jenyns; who, after having wandered in the wilds of infidelity, had returned to the Christian faith. Mr. Langton asked Johnson as to the propriety of *sapientiæ consultus*. JOHNSON: 'Though *consultus* was primarily an adjective, like *amicus* it came to be used as a substantive. So we have *juris consultus*, a consult in law.'

We talked of the styles of different painters, and how certainly a connoisseur could distinguish them. I asked, if there was as clear a difference of styles in language as in painting, or even as in handwriting, so that the composition of every individual may be distinguished? JOHNSON: 'Yes. Those who have a style of eminent excellence, such as Dryden and Milton, can always be distinguished.' I had no doubt of this; but what I wanted to know was, whether there was really a peculiar style to every man whatever, as there is certainly a peculiar handwriting, a peculiar countenance, not widely different in many, yet always enough to be distinctive:

> '. . . facies non omnibus una,
> Nec diversa tamen.'

The Bishop thought not; and said, he supposed that many pieces in Dodsley's collection of poems, though all very pretty, had nothing appropriated in their style, and in that particular could not be at all distinguished. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, I think every man whatever has a peculiar style, which may be discovered by nice examination and comparison with others: but a man must write a great deal to make his style obviously discernible. As logicians say, this appropriation of style is infinite *in potestate*, limited *in actu*.'

Mr. Topham Beauclerk came in the evening, and he and Dr. Johnson and I stayed to supper. It was mentioned that Dr. Dodd had once wished to be a member of the Literary Club. JOHNSON: 'I should be sorry if any of our Club were hanged. I will not say but some of them deserve it. BEAUCLERK (supposing this to be aimed at persons for whom he had at that time a wonderful fancy, which, however, did not last long), was irritated, and eagerly said, 'You, sir, have a friend (naming him)[1] who deserves to be hanged; for he speaks behind their backs against those with whom he lives on the best terms, and attacks them in the newspapers. *He* certainly ought to be *kicked.*' JOHNSON: 'Sir, we all do this in some degree: "*Veniam petimus damusque vicissim.*" To be sure it may be done so much, that a man may deserve to be kicked.' BEAUCLERK: 'He is very malignant.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir, he is not malignant. He is mischievous, if you will. He would do no man an essential injury; he may, indeed, love to make sport of people by vexing their vanity. I, however, once knew an old gentleman who was absolutely malignant. He really wished evil to others, and rejoiced at it.' BOSWELL: 'The gentleman, Mr. Beauclerk, against whom you are so violent, is, I know, a man of good principles.' BEAUCLERK: 'Then he does not wear them out in practice.'

Dr. Johnson, who, as I have observed before, delighted in discrimination of character, and having a masterly knowledge of human nature, was willing to take men as they are, imperfect and with a mixture of

[1] George Steevens.

good and bad qualities, I suppose thought he had said enough in defence of his friend, of whose merits, notwithstanding his exceptional points, he had a just value; and added no more on the subject.

On Tuesday, April 14, I dined with him at General Oglethorpe's, with General Paoli and Mr. Langton. General Oglethorpe declaimed against luxury. JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, every state of society is as luxurious as it can be. Men always take the best they can get.' OGLETHORPE: 'But the best depends much upon ourselves; and if we can be as well satisfied with plain things, we are in the wrong to accustom our palates to what is high-seasoned and expensive. What says Addison in his *Cato*, speaking of the Numidian?

> "Coarse are his meals, the fortune of the chase,
> Amid the running stream he slakes his thirst,
> Toils all the day, and at the approach of night,
> On the first friendly bank he throws him down,
> Or rests his head upon a rock till morn;
> And if the following day he chance to find
> A new repast, or an untasted spring,
> Blesses his stars, and thinks it luxury."

Let us have *that* kind of luxury, sir, if you will.' JOHNSON: 'But hold, sir; to be merely satisfied is not enough. It is in refinement and elegance that the civilised man differs from the savage. A great part of our industry, and all our ingenuity, is exercised in procuring pleasure; and, sir, a hungry man has not the same pleasure in eating a plain dinner that a hungry man has in eating a luxurious dinner. You see I put the case fairly. A hungry man may have as much, nay more, pleasure in eating a plain dinner than a man grown fastidious has in eating a luxurious dinner.

But I suppose the man who decides between the two dinners to be equally a hungry man.'

Talking of different governments,—JOHNSON: 'The more contracted power is, the more easily it is destroyed. A country governed by a despot is an inverted cone. Government there cannot be so firm as when it rests upon a broad basis gradually contracted, as the government of Great Britain, which is founded on the Parliament, then is in the privy council, then in the King.' BOSWELL: 'Power, when contracted into the person of the despot, may be easily destroyed, as the prince may be cut off. So Caligula wished that the people of Rome had but one neck, that he might cut them off at a blow.' OGLETHORPE: 'It was of the senate he wished that. The senate by its usurpation controlled both the Emperor and the people. And don't you think that we see too much of that in our own Parliament?'[1]

Dr. Johnson endeavoured to trace the etymology of Maccaronic verses, which he thought were of Italian invention from Maccaroni; but on being informed that this would infer that they were the most common and easy verses, maccaroni being the most ordinary and simple food, he was at a loss; for he said, 'He rather should have supposed it to import in its primitive signification, a composition of several things;[2] for

[1] [Boswell was right and Oglethorpe wrong: 'Utinam *populus* Romanus unam cervicem haberet.' Suetonius.—CROKER.]

[2] [Dr. Johnson was right in supposing that this kind of poetry derived its name from *maccherone*. 'Ars ista poetica (says Merlin Coccajo, whose true name was Theophilo Folengo: he died in 1544) nuncupatur ars macaronica, a *macaronibus* derivata; qui *macarones* sunt quoddam pulmentum, farina, caseo, butyro compaginatum, grossum, rude, et rusticanum. Ideo macaronica nil nisi grossedinem, ruditatem, et vocabulazzos debet in se continere.'—Warton's *Hist. of Eng. Poet.* ii. 357.—M.]

Maccaronic verses are verses made out of a mixture of different languages, that is, of one language with the termination of another.' I suppose we scarcely know of a language in any country where there is any learning, in which that motley ludicrous species of composition may not be found. It is particularly droll in Low Dutch. The '*Polemo-middinia*' of Drummond of Hawthornden, in which there is a jumble of many languages moulded as if it were all in Latin, is well known. Mr. Langton made us laugh heartily at one in the Grecian mould, by Joshua Barnes, in which are to be found such comical *Anglo-Hellenisms* as Κλύββοισιν ἔβανχθεν: they were banged with clubs.

On Wednesday, April 15, I dined with Dr. Johnson at Mr. Dilly's, and was in high spirits, for I had been a good part of the morning with Mr. Orme, the able and eloquent historian of Hindustan, who expressed a great admiration of Johnson. 'I do not care (said he) on what subject Johnson talks; but I love better to hear him talk than anybody. He either gives you new thoughts, or a new colouring. It is a shame to the nation that he has not been more liberally rewarded. Had I been George the Third, and thought as he did about America, I would have given Johnson three hundred a year for his *Taxation no Tyranny* alone.' I repeated this, and Johnson was much pleased with such praise from such a man as Orme.

At Mr. Dilly's to-day were Mrs. Knowles, the ingenious Quaker lady,[1] Miss Seward, the poetess of

[1] Dr. Johnson, describing her needlework in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, uses the learned word *sutile*; which Mrs. Thrale has mistaken, and made the phrase injurious by writing '*futile* pictures.'

Lichfield, the Reverend Dr. Mayo, and the Rev. Mr. Beresford, tutor to the Duke of Bedford. Before dinner Dr. Johnson seized upon Mr. Charles Sheridan's[1] *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden*, and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying. 'He knows how to read better than any one (said Mrs. Knowles); he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it.' He kept it wrapped up in the table-cloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness, when he should have finished another; resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which had been thrown to him.

The subject of cookery having been very naturally introduced at a table where Johnson, who boasted of the niceness of his palate, owned 'that he always found a good dinner,' he said, 'I could write a better book of cookery than has ever yet been written; it should be a book upon philosophical principles. Pharmacy is now made much more simple. Cookery may be made so too. A prescription which is now compounded of five ingredients, had formerly fifty in it. So in cookery, if the nature of the ingredients be well known, much fewer will do. Then, as you cannot make bad meat good, I would tell what is the best butcher's meat, the best beef, the best pieces; how to choose young fowls; the proper seasons of different vegetables; and then how to roast and boil, and compound.' DILLY: 'Mrs. Glasse's *Cookery*, which

[1] [The elder brother of R. B. Sheridan, Esq. He died in 1806.—M.]

is the best, was written by Dr. Hill. Half the *trade*[1] know this.' JOHNSON: 'Well, sir. This shows how much better the subject of cookery may be treated by a philosopher. I doubt if the book be written by Dr. Hill; for, in Mrs. Glasse's *Cookery*, which I have looked into, saltpetre and sal-prunella are spoken of as different substances, whereas sal-prunella is only saltpetre burnt on charcoal; and Hill could not be ignorant of this. However, as the greatest part of such a book is made by transcription, this mistake may have been carelessly adopted. But you shall see what a book of cookery I shall make: I shall agree with Mr. Dilly for a copyright.' MISS SEWARD: 'That would be Hercules with the distaff indeed.' JOHNSON: 'No, madam. Women can spin very well; but they cannot make a good book of cookery.'

JOHNSON: 'O! Mr. Dilly—you must know that an English Benedictine monk at Paris has translated the Duke of Berwick's *Memoirs*, from the original French, and has sent them to me to sell. I offered them to Strahan, who sent them back with this answer:—"That the first book he had published was the Duke of Berwick's *Life*, by which he had lost: and he hated the name." Now I honestly tell you, that Strahan has refused them; but I also honestly tell you, that he did it upon no principle, for he never looked into them.' DILLY: 'Are they well translated, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, very well—in a style very current and very clear. I have written to the Bene-

[1] As Physicians are called *the Faculty*, and Counsellors at Law *the Profession*, the Booksellers of London are denominated *the Trade*. Johnson disapproved of these denominations.

dictine to give me an answer upon two points;—What evidence is there that the letters are authentic? (for if they are not authentic they are nothing);—And how long will it be before the original French is published? For if the French edition is not to appear for a considerable time, the translation will be almost as valuable as an original book. They will make two volumes in octavo; and I have undertaken to correct every sheet as it comes from the press.' Mr. Dilly desired to see them, and said he would send for them. He asked Dr. Johnson if he would write a Preface for them. JOHNSON: 'No, sir. The Benedictines were very kind to me, and I'll do what I undertook to do; but I will not mingle my name with them. I am to gain nothing by them. I'll turn them loose upon the world, and let them take their chance.' DR. MAYO: 'Pray, sir, are Ganganelli's letters authentic?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. Voltaire put the same question to the editor of them, that I did to Macpherson—Where are the originals?'

Mrs. Knowles affected to complain that men had much more liberty allowed them than women. JOHNSON: 'Why, madam, women have all the liberty they should wish to have. We have all the labour and the danger, and the women all the advantage. We go to sea, we build houses, we do everything, in short, to pay our court to the women.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'The Doctor reasons very wittily, but not convincingly. Now, take the instance of building; the mason's wife, if she is ever seen in liquor, is ruined; the mason may get himself drunk as often as he pleases, with little loss of character; nay, may let his wife and children starve.' JOHNSON: 'Madam, you must con-

sider, if the mason does get himself drunk, and let his wife and children starve, the parish will oblige him to find security for their maintenance. We have different modes of restraining evil. Stocks for the men, a ducking-stool for women, and a pound for beasts. If we require more perfection from women than from ourselves, it is doing them honour. And women have not the same temptations that we have; they may always live in virtuous company; men must mix in the world indiscriminately. If a woman has no inclination to do what is wrong, being secured from it is no restraint to her. I am at liberty to walk into the Thames; but if I were to try it, my friends would restrain me in Bedlam, and I should be obliged to them.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'Still, Doctor, I cannot help thinking it a hardship that more indulgence is allowed to men than to women. It gives a superiority to men, to which I do not see how they are entitled.' JOHNSON: 'It is plain, madam, one or other must have the superiority. As Shakespeare says, "If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind."' DILLY: 'I suppose, sir, Mrs. Knowles would have them ride in panniers, one on each side.' JOHNSON: 'Then, sir, the horse would throw them both.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'Well, I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal.' BOSWELL: 'That is being too ambitious, madam. *We* might as well desire to be equal with the angels. We shall all, I hope, be happy in a future state, but we must not expect to be all happy in the same degree. It is enough, if we be happy according to our several capacities. A worthy carman will get to heaven as well as Sir Isaac Newton. Yet, though equally good, they will not have the

same degrees of happiness.' JOHNSON: 'Probably not.'[1]

Upon this subject I had once before sounded him, by mentioning the late Reverend Mr. Brown of Utrecht's image; that a great and small glass, though equally full, did not hold an equal quantity; which he threw out to refute David Hume's saying, that a little miss, going to dance at a ball, in a fine new dress, was as happy as a great orator, after having made an eloquent and applauded speech. After some thought, Johnson said, 'I come over to the parson.' As an instance of coincidence of thinking, Mr. Dilly told me that Dr. King, a late dissenting minister in London, said to him, upon the happiness in a future state of good men of different capacities, 'A pail does not hold so much as a tub; but, if it be equally full, it has no reason to complain. Every saint in heaven will have as much happiness as he can hold.' Mr. Dilly thought this a clear, though a familiar illustration of the phrase, 'One star differeth from another in brightness.'

Dr. Mayo having asked Johnson's opinion of Soame Jenyns' *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*;—JOHNSON: 'I think it a pretty book; not very theological indeed; and there seems to be an affectation of ease and carelessness, as if it were not suitable to his character to be very serious about the matter.' BOSWELL: 'He may have intended this to introduce his book the better among genteel people, who might be unwilling to read too grave a treatise.

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[1] [See on this question Bishop Hall's *Epistles*, Dec. iii. Epist 6, 'Of the different degrees of heavenly glory, and of our mutual knowledge of each other above.'—M.]

There is a general levity in the age. We have physicians now with bag-wigs; may we not have airy divines, at least somewhat less solemn in their appearance than they used to be?' JOHNSON: 'Jenyns might mean as you say.' BOSWELL: '*You* should like his book, Mrs. Knowles, as it maintains, as your *friends* do, that courage is not a Christian virtue.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'Yes, indeed, I like him there; but I cannot agree with him that friendship is not a Christian virtue.' JOHNSON: 'Why, madam, strictly speaking, he is right. All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend to the neglect, or, perhaps, against the interest, of others; so that an old Greek said, "He that has *friends* has *no friend*." Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence—to consider all men as our brethren; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers. Surely, madam, your sect must approve of this; for you call all men *friends*.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'We are commanded to do good to all men, "but especially to them who are of the household of Faith."' JOHNSON: 'Well, madam. The household of Faith is wide enough.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'But, Doctor, our Saviour had twelve Apostles, yet there was *one* whom he *loved*. John was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved."' JOHNSON (with eyes sparkling benignantly): 'Very well indeed, madam. You have said very well.' BOSWELL: 'A fine application. Pray, sir, had you ever thought of it?' JOHNSON: 'I had not, sir.'

From this pleasing subject he, I know not how or why, made a sudden transition to one upon which he was a violent aggressor; for he said, 'I am willing to

love all mankind *except an American'*: and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter,' calling them 'Rascals—Robbers—Pirates,' and exclaiming, he 'd 'burn and destroy them.' Miss Seward, looking to him with mild but steady astonishment, said, 'Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured.' He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantic. During this tempest I sat in great uneasiness, lamenting his heat of temper; till, by degrees, I diverted his attention to other topics.

Dr. Mayo (to Dr. Johnson): 'Pray, sir, have you read Edwards, of New England, on Grace?' Johnson: 'No, sir.' Boswell: 'It puzzled me so much as to the freedom of the human will, by stating, with wonderful acute ingenuity, our being actuated by a series of motives which we cannot resist, that the only relief I had was to forget it.' Mayo: 'But he makes the proper distinction between moral and physical necessity.' Boswell: 'Alas, sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be bound as hard by chains when covered by leather as when the iron appears. The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity.' Johnson: 'You are surer that you are free than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection

from prescience. It is certain I am either to go home to-night or not; that does not prevent my freedom.' BOSWELL: 'That it is certain you are *either* to go home or not does not prevent your freedom: because the liberty of choice between the two is compatible with that certainty. But if *one* of these events be certain *now*, you have no *future* power of volition. If it be certain you are to go home to-night, you *must* go home.' JOHNSON: 'If I am well acquainted with a man I can judge with great probability how he will act in any case, without his being restrained by my judging. God may have this probability increased to certainty.' BOSWELL: 'When it is increased to *certainty*, freedom ceases, because that cannot be certainly foreknown, which is not certain at the time; but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any *contingency* dependent upon the exercise of will or anything else.' JOHNSON: 'All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it.' I did not push the subject any farther. I was glad to find him so mild in discussing a question of the most abstract nature, involved with theological tenets, which he generally would not suffer to be in any degree opposed.[1]

He, as usual, defended luxury: 'You cannot spend money in luxury without doing good to the poor. Nay, you do more good to them by spending it in luxury, you make them exert industry, whereas by giving it, you keep them idle. I own, indeed, there

[1] If any of my readers are disturbed by this thorny question, I beg leave to recommend to them Letter 69 of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persannes*; and the late Mr. John Palmer of Islington's Answer to Dr. Priestley's mechanical arguments for what he absurdly calls 'Philosophical necessity.'

may be more virtue in giving it immediately in charity than in spending it in luxury; though there may be pride in that too.' Miss Seward asked if this was not Mandeville's doctrine of 'private vices public benefits.' JOHNSON: 'The fallacy of that book is that Mandeville defines neither vices nor benefits. He reckons among vices everything that gives pleasure. He takes the narrowest system of morality, monastic morality, which holds pleasure itself to be a vice, such as eating salt with our fish, because it makes it eat better: and he reckons wealth as a public benefit, which is by no means always true. Pleasure of itself is not a vice. Having a garden, which we all know to be perfectly innocent, is a great pleasure. At the same time, in this state of being there are many pleasures vices, which however are so immediately agreeable that we can hardly abstain from them. The happiness of Heaven will be, that pleasure and virtue will be perfectly consistent. Mandeville puts the case of a man who gets drunk at an alehouse; and says it is a public benefit, because so much money is got by it to the public. But it must be considered that all the good gained by this, through the gradation of alehouse-keeper, brewer, maltster, and farmer, is overbalanced by the evil caused to the man and his family by his getting drunk. This is the way to try what is vicious, by ascertaining whether more evil than good is produced by it upon the whole, which is the case in all vice. It may happen that good is produced by vice, but not as vice; for instance, a robber may take money from its owner, and give it to one who will make a better use of it. Here is good produced; but not by the robbery as robbery, but as

translation of property. I read Mandeville forty, or, I believe, fifty years ago. He did not puzzle me; he opened my views into real life very much. No, it is clear that the happiness of society depends on virtue. In Sparta theft was allowed by general consent: theft, therefore, was *there* not a crime, but then there was no security: and what a life must they have had, when there was no security! Without truth there must be a dissolution of society. As it is, there is so little truth, that we are almost afraid to trust our ears; but how should we be, if falsehood were multiplied ten times! Society is held together by communication and information; and I remember this remark of Sir Thomas Browne's, "Do the devils lie? No; for then Hell could not subsist."'[1]

Talking of Miss ——,[2] a literary lady, he said, 'I was obliged to speak to Miss Reynolds, to let her know that I desired she would not flatter me so much.' Somebody now observed, 'She flatters Garrick.' JOHNSON: 'She is in the right to flatter Garrick. She is in the right for two reasons; first, because she has the world with her, who have been praising Garrick these thirty years; and secondly, because she is rewarded for it by Garrick. Why should she flatter *me*? I can do nothing for her. Let her carry her praise to a better market. (Then turning to Mrs. Knowles,) You, madam, have been flattering me all the evening; I wish you would give Boswell a little now. If you knew his merit as well as I do, you would say a great deal; he is the best travelling companion in the world.'

[1] [This quotation has never been traced.—A. B.]
[2] Miss Hannah More.

Somebody mentioned the Reverend Mr. Mason's prosecution of Mr. Murray, the bookseller, for having inserted a collection of Gray's poems, only fifty lines, of which Mr. Mason had still the exclusive property, under the statute of Queen Anne; and that Mr. Mason had persevered, notwithstanding his being requested to name his own terms of compensation.[1] Johnson signified his displeasure at Mr. Mason's conduct very strongly; but added, by way of showing that he was not surprised at it, 'Mason 's a Whig.' Mrs. Knowles (not hearing distinctly): 'What! a prig, sir?' Johnson: 'Worse, madam; a Whig! But he is both!'

I expressed a horror at the thought of death. Mrs. Knowles: 'Nay, thou shouldst not have a horror for what is the gate of life.' Johnson (standing upon the hearth rolling about, with a serious, solemn, and somewhat gloomy air): 'No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension.' Mrs. Knowles: 'The Scriptures tell us, "The righteous shall have *hope* in his death."' Johnson: 'Yes, madam; that is, he shall not have despair. But, consider, his hope of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised that the mediation of our Saviour shall be applied to us—namely, obedience; and where obedience has failed, then, as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say that his obedience has been such as he would approve of in another, or even in himself upon close examination, or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of? No man can be sure that

[1] See *A Letter to W. Mason, A.M., from J. Murray, Bookseller in London*, second edit., p. 20.

his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'But divine intimation of acceptance may be made to the soul.' JOHNSON: 'Madam, it may; but I should not think the better of a man who should tell me on his deathbed he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance; much less can he make others sure that he has it.' BOSWELL: 'Then, sir, we must be contented to acknowledge that death is a terrible thing.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir. I have made no approaches to a state which can look on it as not terrible.' MRS. KNOWLES (seeming to enjoy a pleasing serenity in the persuasion of benignant divine light): 'Does not St. Paul say "I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life?"' JOHNSON: 'Yes, madam; but here was a man inspired, a man who had been converted by supernatural interposition.' BOSWELL: 'In prospect death is dreadful; but in fact we find that people die easy.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, most people have not *thought* much of the matter, so cannot *say* much, and it is supposed they die easy. Few believe it certain they are then to die; and those who do set themselves to behave with resolution, as a man does who is going to be hanged: he is not the less unwilling to be hanged.' MISS SEWARD: 'There is one mode of the fear of death, which is certainly absurd: and that is the dread of annihilation, which is only a pleasing sleep without a dream.' JOHNSON: 'It is neither pleasing nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist even in pain than not exist.' BOSWELL: 'If annihilation be nothing,

then existing in pain is not a comparative state, but is a positive evil, which I cannot think we should choose. I must be allowed to differ here; and it would lessen the hope of a future state founded on the argument that the Supreme Being, who is good as he is great, will hereafter compensate for our present sufferings in this life. For if existence, such as we have it here, be comparatively a good, we have no reason to complain, though no more of it should be given to us. But if our only state of existence were in this world, then we might with some reason complain that we are so dissatisfied with our enjoyments compared with our desires.' JOHNSON: 'The lady confounds annihilation, which is nothing, with the apprehension of it, which is dreadful. It is in the apprehension of it that the horror of annihilation consists.'

Of John Wesley, he said, 'He can talk well on any subject.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, what has he made of his story of the ghost?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, he believes it; but not on sufficient authority. He did not take time enough to examine the girl. It was at Newcastle, where the ghost was said to have appeared to a young woman several times, mentioning something about the right to an old house, advising application to be made to an attorney, which was done; and, at the same time, saying the attorney would do nothing, which proved to be the fact. "This (says John) is a proof that a ghost knows our thoughts." Now (laughing) it is not necessary to know our thoughts to tell that an attorney will sometimes do nothing. Charles Wesley, who is a more stationary man, does not believe the story. I am sorry that

John did not take more pains to inquire into the evidence for it.' Miss Seward (with an incredulous smile): 'What, sir! about a ghost?' Johnson (with solemn vehemence): 'Yes, madam; this is a question which, after five thousand years, is yet undecided: a question, whether in theology or philosophy, one of the most important that can come before the human understanding.'

Mrs. Knowles mentioned, as a proselyte to Quakerism, Miss ——,[1] a young lady well known to Dr. Johnson, for whom he had shown much affection; while she ever had, and still retained, a great respect for him. Mrs. Knowles at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know 'that the amiable young creature was sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the Church of England and embracing a simpler faith'; and, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, solicited his kind indulgence for what was sincerely a matter of conscience. Johnson (frowning very angrily): 'Madam, she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems.' Mrs. Knowles: 'She had the New Testament before her.' Johnson: 'Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult

[1] Miss Jane Harry. See Miss Seward's *Letters*, vol. i. p. 97, for what I think (*pace* Dr. Hill) a most amusing version of this talk.—A. B.]

book in the world, for which the study of a life is required.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'It is clear as to essentials.' JOHNSON: 'But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself.' MRS. KNOWLES: 'Must we then go by implicit faith?' JOHNSON: 'Why, madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion, have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mohammedan, can say for himself?' He then rose again into passion, and attacked the young proselyte in the severest terms of reproach, so that both the ladies seemed to be much shocked.[1]

We remained together till it was pretty late. Notwithstanding occasional explosions of violence, we were all delighted upon the whole with Johnson. I

[1] Mrs. Knowles, not satisfied with the fame of her needlework, the '*sutile pictures*' mentioned by Johnson, in which she has indeed displayed much dexterity, nay, with the fame of reasoning better than women generally do, as I have fairly shown her to have done, communicated to me a dialogue of considerable length, which, after many years had elapsed, she wrote down as having passed between Dr. Johnson and her at this interview. As I had not the least recollection of it, and did not find the smallest trace of it in my *Record* taken at the time, I could not, in consistency with my firm regard to authenticity, insert it in my work. It has, however, been published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June 1791. It chiefly relates to the principles of the sect called *Quakers*; and no doubt the lady appears to have greatly the advantage of Dr. Johnson in argument as well as expression. From what I have now stated, and from the internal evidence of the paper itself, any one who may have the curiosity to peruse it, will judge whether it was wrong in me to reject it, however willing to gratify Mrs. Knowles.

compared him at this time to a warm West-Indian climate, where you have a bright sun, quick vegetation, luxuriant foliage, luscious fruits; but where the same heat sometimes produces thunder, lightning, earthquakes, in a terrible degree.

END OF VOL. IV

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